



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on September 6, 2011

Youth Joblessness May Hurt Obamas 2012 Reelection

Last week's jobs report could spur further anxiety for President Obama's 2012 reelection campaign, as the President's core constituencies continue to struggle with high unemployment. The Labor Department reported dismal jobs numbers for August, with unemployment continuing to hover around 9 percent – a grave concern for Obama's approval ratings. Young workers, aged 18 to 24, are now burdened with 16.4 percent unemployment, while many more are underemployed. Such affliction for America's youth could prove fatal for Obama's 2012 presidential aspirations, as he garnered nearly 70 percent of 18 to 29 aged voters in 2008.



Both Republican and Democratic strategists predict that today's economic conditions, particularly regarding unemployment, will be critical to 2012's election results. High unemployment for young people could be detrimental to Obama's campaign, as a bleak economic outlook may stir unfavorable political activism among America's youth.

Matthew Segal, president of Our Time, a national organization for Americans under 30, [suggested](#) that unemployment for young people "exposes our nation's ongoing neglect of young workers who also face the deepest student loan debt in history." Regardless of the government's influence on youth employment, the political aftereffects could be critical. Segal adds:

My generation is willing and ready to work immediately, yet we remain an untapped resource for American growth. We have an obtuse political system that rarely seeks the counsel, ideas, or perspectives of young entrepreneurs, business leaders or unemployed workers as part of any political economic advisory team. What kind of message is Washington sending my generation? They cozy up to us during campaign season, but when it comes time to create policy, we are overlooked.

As August's job numbers were released, congressional Republicans unleashed harsh criticism toward the Obama administration. "Job growth continues to disappoint as millions of Americans struggle to find work in our troubled economy," said House Policy Committee Chairman Tom Price (R-Ga.). "The agenda by the White House and Democrats in Congress has only compounded the uncertainty and the nation's fiscal challenges. That is why it is vital that next week when the president addresses the nation about the jobs crisis he offer something other than a retread of the same tired, failed policies of the past."

Studies are beginning to reveal weighty discontent among young people over today's fiscal and economic position. [Generation Opportunity](#), a nonpartisan organization targeted at young adults and early career professionals, interviewed 600 people, aged 18 to 29, and [found](#) that only 31 percent approved of President Obama's handling of youth unemployment.

Generation's nationwide poll also concluded that the majority of young Americans believe the federal



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government must ease taxes and regulations on American businesses, while implementing more fiscally sound economic policies: 76 percent favored a decrease in federal spending from its current levels; 59 percent agreed that economic growth is most often achieved when entrepreneurs are able to create businesses without government interference; and 53 percent said if taxes on business profits were reduced businesses would be more likely to hire new employees.

Paul Conway, president of Generation Opportunity and former Chief of Staff for the U.S. Department of Labor, asserted:

Young Americans watched and waited patiently for elected leaders to finish their summer travel and vacations while their own dreams were put on hold by unemployment and underemployment. Elected leaders in both parties should demonstrate empathy and responsiveness toward the millions of people impacted by the poor economy and return to Washington with a commitment to get government out of the way of those who actually know what it takes to create more jobs.

"This has been another summer of lost opportunities for our nations young people," [alleged](#) Michael Saltsman, a researcher at the Employment Policies Institute. "The combined impacts of the Great Recession and increases in the minimum wage in states and at the federal level have locked thousands out of the labor market As a result, the next generation is missing out on the life lessons that come from an entry-level job."

In 2008, many young Americans anticipated that the current administration would bring job growth and economic prosperity, as they embraced the boisterous campaign slogans "hope," "change," a "new beginning" that its illustrious candidate so touted. But instead, college graduates and young professionals have regrettably turned to flipping burgers, stocking shelves, and answering phone calls. So whatever campaign voodoo the President can blend this time around, critics suggest it had better be potent, because 2012 may present a whole new ballgame.

Photo: Brianna D'Amico, 23, researches jobs at her apartment in Washington, on March 17, 2009. A graduate of Marymount University, D'Amico was let go because of restructuring: AP Images



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