



Republicans Like “Green” Energy Money, Too.

Funny, isn't it? Whenever we see Republicans pinning a tail of profligate spending on the Democratic donkeys, we find the Grand Old Party with its elephant trunks buried deep in the same money trough. Republicans both in and out of Congress have been quite vocal in lambasting the Obama administration over a Department of Energy guarantee for a \$535 million loan to Solyndra, Inc., a California company producing solar panels.

The loan, approved under the President's \$790 billion economic stimulus program two years ago, was praised by Obama and Vice President Joe Biden as the kind of investment in clean, green energy that will create jobs and keep America a leader in the global marketplace. But early this month, Solyndra filed for bankruptcy, leaving Uncle Sam and the U.S. taxpayers on the hook for roughly \$528 million. The company is now under investigation by both the FBI and the U.S. Congress.



So, naturally, the Republicans have had a jolly good time in ripping the administration over green energy boondoggles and the fallacy that the way to revive a stagnant economy and create jobs is to increase government spending and make more public investments in private companies with a "progressive" (environmentally friendly, alternative energy) agenda. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell made that point in a speech on the Senate floor opposing the President's latest stimulus plan, the \$450 billion "Stimulus II" or "Son Of Stimulus" (SOS).

"The first stimulus is a national punch line," McConnell remarked. "Turtle tunnels, sidewalks to nowhere."

"And now we're hearing reports that the White House fast-tracked a half billion dollar loan to a politically-connected energy firm that their own analysts said wasn't ready for primetime. This place was supposed to be the poster child of how the original stimulus would create jobs. Now it's bankrupt and most of its 1,100 employees are out of work. And they want another stimulus?"

Yes, they do, and Mitch probably does, too, his speeches to the contrary notwithstanding. Because under the original stimulus plan, Sen. McConnell made two personal appeals in 2009 to the Secretary of Energy for federal loans of up to \$235 million for a plant to build electric cars in Franklin, Kentucky, the [New York Times](#) reported.

"I hope you will realize the importance of such job creation to Kentucky," McConnell wrote to Energy



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Secretary Steven Chu in a July 2009 message in support an application from Zap Motor Manufacturing. The Zap project could create as many as 4,000 jobs, McConnell said. The Senator, the *Times* noted, made no mention of the company's struggles, including the collapse the previous year of its first Kentucky business partner, Integrity Manufacturing. McConnell went to bat for the project after Zap had hired Kentucky lobbyist Robert Babbage, a frequent contributor to McConnell's campaigns and one who boasts of his ties to the Senator on his web site, the *Times* reported. Gary Dodd, chief executive of Zap Motor, said the company asked McConnell to push for approval of the loan.

"There was no effort to push the administration to short-circuit its due diligence simply to plan a ribbon-cutting," according to a statement issued from McConnell's office, making apparent reference to reports that the Solyndra loan had been fast-tracked by the Obama administration to get it approved in time for a scheduled visit to the California plant by Vice President Biden. Fast track or no, McConnell is indignant over the Obama administration's squandering more than half a billion dollars on a solar panel boondoggle in California, when all Mitch wanted was a couple hundred million or so to build electric cars in his old Kentucky home state. It's enough to make you wonder if he's arguing over principle or price.

It's amazing, too, how easily members of Congress are able to distinguish bacon from pork, apparently without any assistance from the Department of Agriculture or the Food and Drug Administration. Pork is what every Congressman is against. Pork is that wasteful spending that goes to other districts and states, especially those represented by members of the opposing party. Bacon is the name for that wholesome, high-quality meat found in appropriations of federal dollars a Representative or Senator — yea, even a self-advertised "fiscal conservative" — delivers to grateful constituents in his own state or district. As they say in real estate, it's all about "location, location, location." It all depends on where the turtle tunnels, solar panels, or electric car companies are located.

Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.) is a critic of the Energy Department loan program, but that didn't stop him from joining with other members of the Michigan delegation in seeking assistance from the department for a number of clean energy initiatives in the state, including a \$207 million loan request for EcoMotors International. Rep. Cliff Stearns, a Florida Republican, hailed last year's opening in the Sunshine State of a lithium-ion battery plant that received a Department of Energy grant. In 2009, Republican Congressman Lamar Smith of Texas asked the Secretary of Energy to approve a loan guarantee for a solar company in the Lone Star State. Now he is asking the Attorney General to appoint an outside investigator to examine how the Department of Energy distributes money for "green" energy projects.

Smith and others claim to see nothing inconsistent in criticizing government programs, while seeking money from them at the same time. How, after all, is a Congressman to maintain his reputation as a "fiscal conservative" unless he is continually deploring the "pork" while he "brings home the bacon?"

"I wanted to support Texas companies in their applications for grants," Smith explained. "It is the responsibility of the Obama administration to carry out the necessary financial reviews of these proposals."

Well, that explains everything, doesn't it? At least it should explain to anyone watching and listening why we no longer hear Republicans talk about that Reagan-era pledge to abolish the Department of Energy, along with the Department of Education, both of which were created during the Carter administration. Nor did we hear of it during the presidency of George W. Bush, when Republicans controlled the White House and both houses of Congress. And it's unlikely we'll ever hear of it again, no



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matter how many "fiscally conservative" Republicans we elect next year.

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