



Written by [Gary Benoit](#) on February 21, 2009

Who Will Call Obama Out?

President Barack Obama told a White House gathering of 85 of the nation's mayors on February 20 that if they don't spend the "taxpayers' money" wisely, "I will call them out on it." Of course, the money Obama is referring to is not money the cities will be collecting in taxes, but money Washington will provide them as part of the recently enacted \$787 billion "stimulus" legislation.



The federal government will not be collecting the money in taxes for the additional spending either, at least not directly. The provision of the bill that raises the national debt limit by an amount equal to the bill's price tag makes this abundantly clear. But the money is still "taxpayers' money," just as Obama says. When the Federal Reserve creates new money out of thin air to provide the new money being pumped into the economy to pay for the "stimulus" programs, the result will be rising prices. American taxpayers will still pay for the cost of the "stimulus," but they will pay through the hidden tax of inflation as opposed to overt taxation.

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But regardless of where the money comes from, it will still come through Washington, and so Washington will be watching. "You should be succeeding with a hand from Washington, and that's what you're going to get now," President Obama said. "We will use the new tools that the recovery act gives us to watch the taxpayers' money with more rigor and transparency than ever. If a federal agency proposes a project that will waste that money, I will not hesitate to call them out on it and put a stop to it."

The president then told the assembled mayors:

And I want everybody here to be on notice that if a local government does the same, I will call them out on it and use the full power of my office and our administration to stop it. We have asked for the unprecedented trust of the American people to deal boldly with the greatest economic crisis we've seen in decades and the privilege of investing unprecedented amounts of their hard-earned money to address this crisis. And with that comes unprecedented obligations to spend that money wisely — free from politics and free from personal agendas.

On this, I will not compromise or tolerate any shortcuts.



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If we may take the president literally, not just Washington but Obama himself will be watching how the “taxpayers’ money” is spent — by the mayors, and by others — and when the president uncovers wasteful spenders he will “call them out on it” and “stop it.” Yet, if the president were truly a guardian of the taxpayers’ wallets and purses, would he not want to leave the money in those wallets and purses in the first place? Would that not be the best way to avoid waste — to allow those who earned the money to decide best how to spend it?

President Obama at least acknowledged in his talk that spending the taxpayers’ money entails an “unprecedented responsibility and accountability on all of our parts.” He added: “That’s why I’m assigning a team of managers to ensure that every dollar is spent wisely. And that’s why we’ve created [recovery.gov](#) — so that every American can go online to see how their money is spent, and hold their federal, state, and local officials to the highest standards they expect.” Of course, the federal government is setting the bar low from the get-go, when it tries to hide the cost of its programs by borrowing the money rather than asking the American people for the taxes upfront.

Not that the money should be taken from the American people in the first place, but if it is to be taken it should be taken openly rather than through inflation.

But suppose all of the “stimulus” money is spent without any waste or inefficiencies? Will that somehow make this gargantuan redistribution-of-the-wealth program right? Is efficient socialism the goal? Obama obviously thinks that it is.



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