

Here's [the link](#) to most of my LTE that was published on February 23rd. As it got chopped up a bit, here's the text of the letter.

Obama broke promise for a reason

Re: "The president's broken budget promises," Wednesday:

Generally, it's a bad thing when presidents break promises, but it was worse when President Obama attempted to "pivot" from repairing the economy in the wake of the collapse of the housing bubble in early 2010. Getting the stimulus into place was a good thing to have done, but the economy needed, and still needs, much more of the same. He never should have diverted from restoring consumer demand. That's a job that wasn't finished when Obama initiated the "Cat Food Commission," that is, the Simpson-Bowles deficit reduction commission.

Getting the deficit down is something that eventually needs doing, but it can wait until unemployment has fallen to the 3 percent to 4 percent range. To work on the deficit before then is an extremely foolish diversion from what needs doing.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) said in 2009, "We're never going to decrease the deficit until we create jobs, bring revenue into the Treasury, stimulate the economy, so we have growth." She was correct then, and that course remains the correct one to follow.

Richmond L Gardner, Horsham, rlg3526@ix.netcom.com

I got three people responding. Here was the first fellow:

Subject: letter

Date: Feb 23, 2012 2:27 PM

Richmond:

You really have no idea what you are talking about. Here are some facts for you. The Reb. control the house, and really the Senate to as you need 60 votes for anything to be done. There was no way he could get any thing additional passed because of the Reb. He is doing the most he can and you should support that. What you should be doing is trying to make sure not one Reb. is elected to congress this year. He will then be able to get his full program in place. I hope you did not vote for any Reb. in the last election. If you did you are a cause of our problems.

John

I sent back an annoyed message:

Subject: Re: letter

Date: Feb 23, 2012 4:10 PM

Who the %\$#% is "Reb"?

Never got a response to that. I guess "Reb" is the Republican opposition, perhaps? I had never heard

that term for them before and still have no idea what the reference is supposed to mean. Yeah, John has a number of good points as to how difficult it is to get anything through the legislature, but the legislative details come *after* the American people decide what the best course of action is.

The second set was nicely concise.

Subject: jobs

Date: Feb 23, 2012 4:07 PM

Interesting LTE.....Creating jobs > There is a push to increase the minimum wage to above \$8.00 per hour. Do you believe this would create jobs?

I answered:

Subject: Re: jobs

Date: Feb 23, 2012 5:42 PM

Yes. Getting more money to ordinary wage-earners will increase consumer demand and economists have been very clear for many years that the lack of consumer demand is the primary problem with our economy today. The rich guys, the 1%, are doing fine and don't need any help, but we urgently need to boost the incomes of the 99% in order to get the economy working again.

Rich

He responded:

Sent: Feb 23, 2012 9:31 PM

To: 'Rich Gardner'

Subject: RE: jobs

Raising the minimum raise to \$8.00 then, would have a beneficial effect. Would requiring a raise to \$16.00 have twice the beneficial effect ?

Subject: RE: jobs

Date: Feb 24, 2012 6:43 AM

No, let's not get overly excited and go for too much of a good thing. Surveys of food service places before and after minimum wage rises show that they're relatively inelastic as far as numbers of people on the job go. If you need 20 people to cover all of the positions in a McDonald's, a rise of \$0.25 in the minimum wage will not cause you to let anybody go. A rise of \$4 will probably lead owners to automate even more of it and to overly stress the remaining workers.

My own preferred route to getting Americans back to work would be public works projects. They worked well back during the 1930s and can work well today. The cash-for-clunkers program worked quite well at getting the auto companies back on their feet.

Rich

Actually, I looked it up afterwards and as the minimum wage is \$7.25, he was speaking of a rise of \$0.75. Still sounds like a good thing to do.

Sent: Feb 24, 2012 10:48 AM
To: 'Rich Gardner'
Subject: RE: jobs

Why, do you think the Works Project Administration is not even suggested or discussed or proposed by the Administration or anyone, including the Press at this time of needed employment ?

Subject: RE: jobs
Date: Feb 24, 2012 12:35 PM

I think our president's a cautious, centrist-inclined, Blue Dog Democrat type of fellow and doesn't want to suggest ideas that he know the Republicans will reject out of hand and then use to paint him as a lefty radical.

Rich

Sent: Feb 24, 2012 3:24 PM
To: 'Rich Gardner'
Subject: RE: jobs

Let us agree a Works Project Act is a good and necessary idea...and let's assume Obama knows and agrees it's a good and necessary move, but he refuses to propose a Works Project Act because he fears the Republicans will call him a Liberal. Can we now refer to Obama as showing real Leadership ?

Subject: RE: jobs
Date: Feb 25, 2012 6:49 AM

Yeah, I'm pretty unhappy with Obama not showing as much courage and leadership as he could be showing.
Rich

The next guy just went on and on and on.

Subject: FW: Leftists may break promises for the greater good
Date: Feb 23, 2012 8:14 PM

Sir,

It is never my intention to embarrass anyone, but I have to say it is a real exercise to figure out where to begin to discredit your analysis. To start with, you try to explain away what you see as a promise the president didn't keep. Please show me one he kept. You say we need to restore "consumer demand". As we continue to have people quit even looking for jobs, what are the prospects for attaining the number of consumers necessary in this country to get the economy moving? Your snarky description of the well thought out Simpson-Bowles commission report is as dismissive and juvenile as the president who commissioned it. "Getting the deficit down...eventually needs doing" you say with your

barometer indicating we need to wait until unemployment has fallen to the 3 to 4 percent range. Will the cows come home, too? Your final demonstration of irrationality is having the temerity to quote the feckless Nancy Pelosi as corroboration for your misguided thesis. Obama and Pelosi's "course" is headed toward Greece. Stephen Hanover

To which I responded:

Subject: RE: Leftists may break promises for the greater good

Date: Feb 23, 2012 9:13 PM

Mr. Hanover,

I took the liberty of numbering your points for you.

1. Please show me one [promise President Obama] kept.

Reuters covered this in January

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/24/us-usa-obama-speech-factbox-idUSTRE80N0UZ20120124>

The record is definitely a mixed one. There are many promises not kept, but by no means can we say he hasn't kept any.

2. You say we need to restore "consumer demand". As we continue to have people quit even looking for jobs, what are the prospects for attaining the number of consumers necessary in this country to get the economy moving?

Not entirely sure what the question is here, but economists (Real economists, not the guys who failed to see the housing bubble before it popped and destroyed the economy) tell us that the key to recovery is to get money to people of modest means, i.e., the middle and working classes. Fixing the mortgage crisis will certainly help. USA Today sketched out some of Obama's ideas last year, one major good one of which is:

On Monday, the administration proposed spending \$50 billion to rebuild 150,000 miles of roads, construct and maintain 4,000 miles of rail and fix or rebuild 150 miles of runway. "Contractors are hungry for work," says Ethan Pollack, policy analyst at the liberal Economic Policy Institute. Moody's Zandi and Princeton's Alan Blinder have estimated that every \$1 of infrastructure spending generates \$1.57 of economic growth.

http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/taxes/2010-09-08-obamataxplan08_ST_N.htm

3. Your snarky description of the well thought out Simpson-Bowles commission report is as dismissive and juvenile as the president who commissioned it.

The Commission was referred to as the "Cat Food Commission" because the effect of their suggestions would have resulted in our senior citizens being grateful to get a can of cat food for their dinner. The idea of the commission was to impoverish our citizens and to drive everyone into the poor house. Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) dropped out because the plan wasn't mean and vicious and hateful enough. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) brought enormous credit and good will towards herself by dropping out and presenting an excellent substitute plan.

http://schakowsky.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2777:

4. "Getting the deficit down...eventually needs doing" you say with your barometer indicating we need to wait until unemployment has fallen to the 3 to 4 percent range.

Aye.

>Will the cows come home, too?

Not sure what your criticism is supposed to be.

5. Your final demonstration of irrationality is having the temerity to quote the feckless Nancy Pelosi as corroboration for your misguided thesis.

Her suggestion was and is entirely on the mark. Yeah, Republicans hate her. Pfft.

6. Obama and Pelosi's "course" is headed toward Greece.

No, Greece doesn't have its own currency. America can write checks to itself and print money to cash those checks. Greece is dependent on the Euro and thus on the central bankers of Europe who have a stubborn attachment to policies of austerity. The US isn't as badly off as Europe because the policies of austerity don't have as tight a grip on the minds of the Very Serious People here as they do there, but we need to shake our VSPs off of austerity entirely so that we can recover.

Rich Gardner

Subject: RE: Leftists may break promises for the greater good

Date: Feb 24, 2012 11:10 AM

Mr. Gardner,

It was considerate of you to acknowledge my riposte. You seem a reasonable man, at least as reasonable as a leftist can be. I appreciate your addressing all the points here rather than choosing just the ones with which you feel most comfortable, as most of those I talk to do. I will retrace your attempts at refutation and try to elucidate.

1. I take the blame here for phrasing my point weakly. I should say he generally has not accomplished what he has said he would, i.e. unemployment, debt reduction, present a real budget that doesn't get rejected 97-0 and much more.

2. My point that I guessed you missed is "consumer demand" is contingent upon having employed people with disposable income in order to buy items other than the staples of life. How are we to do that with fewer private sector jobs, people quitting looking for work and lower pay for those that do? Your example of the proposed 50 billion of "investment" is amusing. A real, private sector project [Keystone] that would use no taxpayer money and have many other benefits is rejected solely for political reasons. Please tell me if it isn't fair to question whether he has the best interests of this country at heart.

3. I don't know where you got the over the top description of the Simpson-Bowles report but my guess is "The Nation".

4. Your pie-in-the-sky goal of 3-4% unemployment under this [or any] administration is as likely as Joe Biden keeping his mouth shut.

5. As I said you're known by the references you make. If you want to have Pelosi representing you it

speaks for itself. She makes Maxine Waters look intelligent.

6. This is the best. "America can write checks and print money to cash those checks". Mr. Gardner, don't you see that policy will only lead to the further devaluing of our currency and a need to dramatically increase the interest needed to sell evermore bonds [that is to anyone but ourselves]. It reminds me of the woman who is at the teller's window and says "what do you mean I'm out of money, I still have plenty of checks". This is pure lunacy.

With faith that we'll still have a country after November, Stephen Hanover

As to addressing all of his points, well, that's the advantage of having done these arguments a lot over the years and of having done lots of partisan political writing as well. I don't blame people for not being able to take an all-points approach the way I did and am not sure what he gains by asking so many questions. I preferred the guy before, even though he ridiculously overstated my initial position on the minimum wage.

Subject: RE: Leftists may break promises for the greater good

Date: Feb 24, 2012 3:05 PM

I will retrace your attempts at refutation and try to elucidate.

Cool.

1. I take the blame here for phrasing my point weakly. I should say he generally has not accomplished what he has said he would, i.e. unemployment, debt reduction, present a real budget that doesn't get rejected 97-0 and much more.

True, and his own "pivot" away from jobs and the economy to deficit reduction early in 2010 was a major reason why the economy continues to stink so bad. A major problem with his pivot was that solving the problem of the budget being unbalanced and the problem of unemployment are mutually exclusive and contradictory. You can only solve one at the expense of the other. Obama's pivot was a terrible move, he should have kept his eye on the ball and should have focused exclusively on employment.

Obama seems now to have reached the right conclusion, that jobs come first and that deficits should be placed on the far back burner, but the Republican Party clearly feels that a bad economy is to their electoral advantage, so improving it is going to be a challenge.

2. My point that I guessed you missed is "consumer demand" is contingent upon having employed people with disposable income in order to buy items other than the staples of life. How are we to do that with fewer private sector jobs, people quitting looking for work and lower pay for those that do? Your example of the proposed 50 billion of "investment" is amusing. A real, private sector project [Keystone] that would use no taxpayer money and have many other benefits is rejected solely for political reasons. Please tell me if it isn't fair to question whether he has the best interests of this country at heart.

No, Keystone was rejected because it would be environmentally disastrous.

I'm sorry, but I'm just not clear on how you can agree that we need employed people spending money and that Keystone would be a good thing economically for that very reason, but the idea of public works projects is merely "amusing." How do you reconcile the two?

A job is a job. Whether it's private or public is a narrow, technical distinction that's completely irrelevant to

economic recovery. Does firing a public school teacher or firefighter make the loss of that job any less of a problem as far as the economy is concerned? For a public employee to lose their job means a loss of income and that hurts the economy just as much as when a private employee loses their job/income.

3. I don't know where you got the over the top description of the Simpson-Bowles report but my guess is "The Nation".

Over the top or restrained, my description remains accurate. Are you suggesting that "The Nation" is an automatically non-credible source and that their advocacy of an idea immediately discredits the idea? We might as well hear Sean Hannity declare that the sky was blue and to say "Well, the sky can't be blue because Hannity is a liar." No, we know the sky is blue because we can go outside and look at it and hey, twice a day, a stopped clock is right. Just because Hannity regularly lies doesn't mean we can automatically discount everything he says.

What's quite obvious to me, having looked into the details of what the Simpson-Bowles commission recommended, is that it's completely unnecessary to touch Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid. The real budget problem is with the rising cost of medical care and that 1. We pay about twice per capita for medical care what every other advanced country pays 2. Our medical care is of mediocre quality with middling outcomes 3. Every other advanced country, have single-payer health care. Ergo, if we had single-payer, our budget would be balanced.

Simpson-Bowles attacked Social Security because that's a target that satisfied their ideological predilections. It helps their ideological friends and hurts their ideological enemies.

4. Your pie-in-the-sky goal of 3-4% unemployment under this [or any] administration is as likely as Joe Biden keeping his mouth shut.

Which means deficit reduction should be put off for a long, long time.

5. As I said you're known by the references you make. If you want to have Pelosi representing you it speaks for itself. She makes Maxine Waters look intelligent.

Last July, Speaker Boehner was surprised by his own caucus on the debt-ceiling vote. He didn't know how his own caucus was going to vote and so he was forced to back down and re-schedule. That NEVER happened with Pelosi. Pelosi was an excellent vote-counter, knew where her caucus stood and knew what to give in on and what to push for. The standard, basic reaction of a political party that loses power is to fire their leadership. Pelosi was retained by an overwhelming vote margin. Methinks you're going by appearance and not by results.

6. This is the best. "America can write checks and print money to cash those checks". Mr. Gardner, don't you see that policy will only lead to the further devaluing of our currency and a need to dramatically increase the interest needed to sell evermore bonds [that is to anyone but ourselves]. It reminds me of the woman who is at the teller's window and says "what do you mean I'm out of money, I still have plenty of checks". This is pure lunacy.

Funny, but people have been earnestly warning us of the dreaded "Bond Vigilantes" for many, many years. Like the fabled "Confidence Fairy," these vigilantes never actually seem to make an appearance. Investors are absolutely begging the government to borrow their money, you can tell by the interest rates they charge.

With faith that we'll still have a country after November,

Yup, as long as America works for the right priorities, we'll be fine.

Cheers,

Rich

Subject: RE: Leftists may break promises for the greater good

Date: Feb 24, 2012 3:51 PM

You are a smart man but I'm afraid we are from different planets. Re. Keystone, I know you know that the project underwent 3 years of study, more than any before it, and was good to go. Obama yielded to the tree-huggers, pure and simple. All jobs are not the same. Continuing a CCC or WPA just takes money from taxpayers and transfers it to the temporary workers. Private enterprise is our only salvation. I referenced "The Nation" because I think Katrina Van den Heuvel is a witch [as is Pelosi]. Again, Obama's expenditures' projection has us at the 22 trillion debt level by 2020. It is mind-boggling and I don't know how you can reconcile it. I admire your cheery closing. You must know something I don't. By the way, with the firewall you've put up to screen e-mails you should have been responsible for protecting all those files that the cretin PFC stole for Wikileaks. What a mess. Remember the old Saying "There will always be an England". Well, I'm not so sure of that and I have recently started to wonder about us as well. Perhaps, as was the advice in "Animal House", we should all start drinking heavily. Regards, Steve

Subject: RE: Leftists may break promises for the greater good

Date: Feb 25, 2012 6:52 AM

Yeah, we're just going to have to agree to disagree.
Rich

It's annoying when people finish off like that. He wanted to get a few more digs in AND end the conversation! I generally tend to either continue OR I end it.

As to Keystone, see [Tar Sands Action](#). As you can see, his description of the environmental review is accurate *and* irrelevant.

Actually, "Continuing a CCC or WPA" takes money from the deficit, not from taxpayers. At worst, it takes money from an account where the money is just sitting around gathering dust anyway. If there's no consumer demand, there's no point in investing anything, so investors don't have much of anywhere to put their money nowadays.

At first, I was confused by his reference to Nancy Pelosi as making "Maxine Waters look intelligent." As I pointed out, Pelosi is an extremely good legislator. Then I realized with his reference to Katrina vanden Heuvel that he was confusing political figures with whom he disagreed with people who were unintelligent. Not the same thing at all.