

Obama jobs bill contains legalized theft, social engineering

By Wayne Hoffman

I sure wish the federal government would stop trying to help us. The latest big-government bailout comes from President Obama's so-called "American Jobs Act." You've no doubt noticed that the president has refrained from calling it a "stimulus" bill, because it is quite apparent his latest economic swindle won't stimulate anything. Obama's bill would shovel \$475 million into the state of Idaho. The White House says its legislation would provide \$160 million to keep 2,500 teachers, police officers and firefighters on the job, pay for \$190 million in highway and transit projects, supply \$105 million for fixes to schools and community colleges and \$20 million to fix up vacant or foreclosed homes and commercial buildings.

With such a massive boondoggle, it's hard to know precisely where to start with the criticism, so here goes: First, why should taxpayers be responsible for funding the renovation of privately-owned commercial or residential buildings? Obama may as well show up at your house and demand money to help pay for my neighbor's new siding. It is more than reprehensible. It is legalized theft.

Second, as noted last year when the federal government came riding to the rescue with a fist full of cash, schools and cities are just beginning to make some long-delayed decisions about how to better utilize taxpayer dollars. School districts and municipalities are once again being told they don't have to make tough decisions like everyone else. Indeed, it is also interesting how the government manages to make the hiring and retention of government employees a lead priority, and yet that's exactly the type of spending that does nothing to benefit the economy, as it does nothing to bolster or promote production.

Third, the promises of millions of dollars to help fix schools and community colleges is predicated on the Obama's appeal to Congress that "every child deserves a great school — and we can give it to them, if we act now." Pretty buildings are not necessarily great schools. There's nothing in Obama's legislation that would make a school great. The legislation may help repair buildings (construction of new schools is not funded by the bill), but Idahoans have long been capable of supplying their own funding for school needs. They choose what projects to fund or not fund. Obama bypasses voter oversight. Incidentally, Obama's legislation drives up costs, because it demands that prevailing wages be paid on all projects, and it places heavy emphasis on "green" jobs, using the word "green" no fewer than 20 times.

Fourth, much of the transportation projects contained in the legislation are more social engineering by the White House -- an attempt to move mass transit to places where it is not wanted or needed. The legislation provides billions of dollars to rail and bus systems, putting the cost entirely on the backs of federal taxpayers "in order to speed project delivery," according to the legislation. Read that to mean "we're picking up the tab in order to keep local and state elected officials from putting much thought into the long-term financial obligations or consequences of such projects."

Finally, the legislation contain the extension of unemployment benefits. That does nothing to help the economy and, if anything, has been shown to prolong unemployment.

This legislation is a mess of immense proportions. Hopefully Washington, D.C., will realize that and just say no, and then Idahoans can breathe a sigh of relief that the federal government's "help" is not on the way.