

“We Can’t Wait” - *President Barack Obama, October 24, 2011*

<http://tinyurl.com/83zcaep>

PRESIDENT OBAMA’S AGENDA INCLUDES THESE OBJECTIVES:

- **Restore or modernize America’s infrastructure,**
- **Develop and deploy clean-energy technology, and**
- **Create jobs and Restore America’s economic health.**

These are all solid objectives. Unfortunately, a dysfunctional Congress is preventing progress in all three areas. It’s apparent that if President Obama is to succeed in implementing the above objectives, he must find legal ways to work independently of the 112th Congress.

Several possibilities are suggested by this opinion piece, which proposes that President Obama appeal directly to wealthy individuals, private corporations, and state governors to establish and fund several single-purpose consortiums to achieve the above objectives. What is a consortium? Please see the brief descriptions of “Commercial”, “Airbus example”, and “Coopetition”: <http://tinyurl.com/3gaf5wm>

Please consider these suggestions, not as fully-developed, detailed solutions, but instead as a conceptual framework and ideas that could lead to developing an effective strategy that enables President Obama to achieve the above objectives.

This paper is dynamic, as new ideas or refinements are frequently added. It can be found on-line at: <http://www.stephen-heitmann.info/content/what-could-obama-do-bypass-congress.pdf>

WHAT COULD PRESIDENT OBAMA DO? SOME POSSIBILITIES...

- **CONVINCE PRIVATE CORPORATIONS TO ESTABLISH AND FUND CONSORTIUMS TO STIMULATE BUSINESS, CREATE JOBS, AND**
 - [Fund Development Of Clean-Energy Technologies](#)
 - [Fund Renovation And Modernization Of America's Infrastructure](#)
 - [Establish A New Economy Based On Existing Space Technology Investments](#)
- **RAISE GAS TAXES TO FUND INFRASTRUCTURE REPAIR AND MODERNIZATION; AND TO FUND CLEAN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT**
- **Ask Citizen’s To Voluntarily Pay Clinton- or Reagan-Era Taxes**
- **END THE WARS; REDUCE SPENDING BY \$3 BILLION PER WEEK; AND ASSIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL TO OPERATION REBUILD AMERICA**

FYI:

For those readers who blame President Obama for not implementing most of his common-sense agenda, please consider this: <http://tinyurl.com/3b47ru9>

CONVINCE PRIVATE CORPORATIONS TO ESTABLISH AND FUND A CONSORTIUM TO INVEST IN CLEAN-ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES

Work with America's millionaires, billionaires, oil and insurance companies, other highly profitable corporations, and venture capital firms to establish and fund an *Operation Rebuild America* consortium focused solely on Clean-Energy technology development and deployment.

Investments would be restricted to Clean-Energy technology companies only. Depending on each prospective investment opportunity, funding could be in the form of a low-interest loan, purchase of publicly-traded stock, or purchase of higher-risk stock in less established private corporations with promising Clean-Energy technology. Investment decisions would be made with normal due-diligence, practiced by venture capital firms, except at an accelerated rate. Project proposals or responses to consortium RFPs would require use of military personnel to the extent feasible (see [END THE WARS, #2](#) below). Because such personnel would receive standard military pay, funds to hire a portion of needed construction workers or engineers would be optimized, thus reducing the total required project funding.

Investors in the consortium, whether or not competitors in the marketplace, would then get an ROI from loan interest, sale of stock, or even from a percentage of licensing and sales of the commercially-ready technology.

There are several near-term 24x7 energy technologies that are ready or nearly ready for commercialization. Please read this executive overview for specifics and detailed references: <http://tinyurl.com/3dom9lp/>. Funds aren't needed so much for R&D, but more for developing large-scale commercialization and manufacturing capability.

Development and/or deployment of these commercial technologies would then create millions of jobs in the new Clean-Energy economy.

CONVINCE PRIVATE CORPORATIONS TO ESTABLISH AND FUND A CONSORTIUM TO INVEST IN RENOVATION AND MODERNIZATION OF AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Work with America's millionaires, billionaires, oil and insurance companies, other highly profitable corporations, and venture capital firms to establish and fund an *Operation Rebuild America* consortium focused solely on investing in restoring or modernizing America's infrastructure.

Investments would be restricted to construction or other companies with the expertise needed to infrastructure renewal. Depending on each prospective investment opportunity, funding could be in the form of a low-interest loan or purchase of publicly-traded stock. Investment decisions would be made with normal due-diligence, practiced by venture capital firms, except at an accelerated rate. Project proposals or responses to consortium RFPs would require use of military personnel to the extent feasible (see [END THE WARS, #2](#) below). Because such personnel would receive standard military pay, funds to hire a portion of needed construction workers or engineers would be optimized, thus reducing the total required project funding.

Investors in the consortium, whether or not competitors in the marketplace, would then get an ROI from loan interest or sale of stock.

CONVINCE PRIVATE CORPORATIONS TO ESTABLISH AND FUND A CONSORTIUM TO INVEST IN ESTABLISHING A NEW ECONOMY BASED ON EXISTING SPACE TECHNOLOGY

America has the means to create possibly millions of jobs, eliminate the deficit, reduce the debt, and reduce the trade deficit. Not in the blink of an eye, of course, but gradually over the same ten-year period during which those pseudo-deficit-obsessed do-nothing right-wing Republicans aspire to cut spending by \$2 Trillion.

We have the means to create an entirely new Green economy, bigger than the Automotive Industry and the Computer Industry combined.

We have a realistic, practical, and lucrative opportunity to get a return on those tens of billions of tax-payer dollars invested in landing astronauts on the moon and later landing robotic craft on Mars. And seizing that opportunity could also leverage and accelerate implementation of the technologies developed by [private corporations](#)^{6,9} for the purpose of commercializing Space.

Why not repurpose or focus this Space technology to mine the asteroids? It's estimated that *just one* large asteroid, Amun, could produce a variety of minerals valued in the trillions of dollars after the cost of infrastructure construction, mining, processing and ferrying back to earth.

Sound far-fetched? Not really. Advanced robotic craft, capable of landing on Mars and analyzing mineral samples, could be repurposed to identify very large mineral-rich asteroids. With the likely to be successful [VASIMR engine](#)¹, human miners could travel to pre-identified target asteroids relatively quickly and even live in space colonies within the Asteroid Belt built from materials mined from these asteroids and powered by safe and plentiful Thorium molten-salt—MSR--nuclear reactors—Thorium can be mined from an asteroid or from Earth's moon. Mined minerals, possibly even partially processed using solar furnaces, could be hurled, using magnetic mass-accelerators, from several asteroids being mined to VASIMR powered barges that ferry the ore at high-speed to moon orbit. Complete refining could be done at a permanent processing plant in moon orbit, powered by cheap continuously available solar energy--both electrical and thermal. Finished processed material could be ferried to earth using a next-generation space shuttle.

And about that trade deficit... steel—it's needed ubiquitously worldwide for everything from cars to spoons and from high-rise construction to ball-bearings. Lithium-Ion batteries--needed for cell phones, notebooks, and electric vehicles; and several other rare earth elements (REEs)--in short supply, needed to manufacture flat-screen TVs and LED's (the next revolution in lighting).

America, once dominating the steel industry, now imports much of its steel. And about 97% of those rare earth elements, essential for manufacturing iPads, hybrid cars, LED Christmas lights, and much more, come from mines in China, not mines in the U.S. We have to import them to manufacture many of the high-tech products Americans enjoy. And just look at all the [high-tech products](#)² that are dependent on rare-earth elements (REEs).

All these elements, in addition to gold and silver, are abundant in asteroids. Why not mine the asteroids, refine the ore in Space, use them in U.S. based industry, and export them, too? Moreover, America would cease to be dependent on China for materials critical to another major facet of America's economy. There are other benefits to mining the asteroids, too: environmental pollution from mining these metals would be reduced—or certainly not increased by mining these resources from new mines in the United States;

and the substantial electrical power needed to mine and process ores would not add to the already heavily burdened U.S. power grid.

Once the VASIMR engine is successfully tested in Earth orbit, is there any critical-path technology not already developed and tested that's needed to achieve this goal? From food and water--hydroponics and aquaculture to supply miners with fresh food, packaged prepared meals with long-term shelf life, and fuel cells to synthesize water—to electrical energy generation from safe MSRs, to specialized zero-gravity tools, telemetry, space shuttle technology, and lots more, too numerous to list—is there *anything* that could prevent NASA from establishing this new Space-based mining economy?

Yes. The dysfunctional U.S. Congress would stop it cold, because it requires investment funds framed myopically by the right-wing Republicans as “spending”. Again, a Congress work-around is required that relies on private industry.

By realizing this goal in increments, it's probably possible to use seed capital that could be raised—once again as above—by working with America's millionaires, billionaires, oil and insurance companies, other highly profitable corporations, and venture capital firms to establish and fund a consortium focused solely on investing in developing Space-based mining.

The first increment would require a relatively small amount of seed capital (compared to the cost of establishing sustainable mining operations in the Asteroid Belt). How much? That's an amount that needs to be estimated. However, in 2011 dollars, the *entire* Apollo program, from R&D through implementation and execution of multiple landings, cost around \$250B; the International Space Station is estimated to cost, over a *thirty year period*, less than \$150B; and SpaceX's "[Falcon 9 launch vehicle](#)⁷ was developed from a blank sheet to first launch in four and half years for just over \$300 million”.

How would the first increment ore-processing plant generate revenues? Feasibility studies would be required to determine the least funding required to establish the most cost-effective and profitable prototype Space mining operation. Assuming operational VASIMR-powered Space-barges to transport ore at high speed, possibilities that could be assessed include these two prototype systems: 1) mining near earth asteroids (NEOs), such as [Trojan](#)³ or [Potentially Hazardous](#)⁴ asteroids, and constructing a second space station in Earth orbit to process the ore and to provide living accommodations for miners, 2) build a prototype ore processing plant in synchronous moon orbit, mine ore from the moon, and catapult the ore to the orbiting processing plant using magnetic mass-accelerators powered by a Thorium-based MSR.

In either case, the refined metals would then be shipped to Earth via a second generation [space shuttle](#)⁸ and sold by the consortium—revenues for a presumably healthy ROI and for funding larger-scale mining operations in the Asteroid Belt or of Trojan asteroids in the Mars or Jupiter orbital paths.

Is it feasible for a private sector consortium to pool hundreds of billions in seed funds? If so, is it feasible to establish a moon- or Earth-orbiting ore processing plant and Space mining prototype in less than 5 years? Is it then feasible to be mining a potentially high-profit asteroid in the Asteroid Belt within five years later? It's a ponderable possibility, isn't it? And if feasible, it would result in significant benefits:

- A major new U.S. economy,
- Major new mineral resources,
- No pollution from mining,
- No demand from the terrestrial power grid for mining and processing ores,

- U.S. independence from foreign mining operations and supply,
- A potential for generating trillions in revenues per large asteroid, and
- Possibly, as a side-effect, mining and then eliminating asteroids that could impact Earth

The number of people required—support services, electronics, robotics, telemetry, computer software, communications, food sciences, hydroponics, mining, engineering, pilots, shelter construction, clothing, tools, shuttle craft, and much, much more—could create millions of new jobs, possibly within 10 years.

References

- 1 VASIMR engine <http://tinyurl.com/3r634uk>
- 2 Rare-earth dependent products <http://tinyurl.com/3nbvfin>
- 3 Trojan Asteroid <http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news173.html>
- 4 Known Potentially Hazardous Asteroids (PHAs) <http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/orbits/>
- 5 NASA, Lunar Surface Systems Overview <http://tinyurl.com/42ftgrx>
- 6 SpaceX <http://www.spacex.com/>
<http://tinyurl.com/3nrnnbf>
- 7 <http://www.spacex.com/usa.php>
- 8 <http://www.spacex.com/dragon.php>
- 9 Private Spaceflight Companies <http://tinyurl.com/23scla>

ENCOURAGE STATE GOVERNORS TO RAISE GAS TAXES TO FUND INFRASTRUCTURE REPAIR AND MODERNIZATION; AND TO FUND CLEAN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT FOR THEIR STATES.

Work with and convince state governors to contribute funding for *Operation Rebuild America* in their respective states by establishing a *temporary gas surtax* that could quickly generate substantial revenues to accomplish the two objectives below. Only some states would participate and reap the benefits, but the extent of participation would reduce the consortium funding required as outlined above in the Clean Energy and Infrastructure sections.

- 1) adequately fund the state to accomplish needed infrastructure repair and modernization
- 2) apply excess funds to Clean Energy technology development or deployment within the state.

Set a ceiling price per gallon (PPG) of, say, for example, \$6.50 for Regular. For higher octane gas, the ceiling would be proportionately higher. For Regular gas, surtax revenue would be \$6.50 minus the prevailing actual PPG. Example: if actual PPG is \$3.92, surtax revenue would be $\$6.50 - \$3.92 = \$2.58$ per gallon. If the actual PPG exceeds the \$6.50 ceiling, then no surtax is paid. And if actual PPG drops to, say \$2.89, surtax revenue would be $\$6.50 - \$2.89 = \$3.61$.

In other words, the surtax is always the difference between the per gallon ceiling set for a given octane and the prevailing price of gas per gallon.

With the amount of gas consumed monthly nationwide, it wouldn't take long to generate the 72 billion dollars, estimated by the U.S. Highway Trust Fund directors, required for *all* states for infrastructure repair and modernization projects. Assuming all states participate, which is unlikely, especially where governors are ideologically opposed to raising taxes, the following calculations show the potential magnitude of funds that could be generated relatively quickly.

Based on the 2011 Statistical Abstract of the United States, Section 23-Transportation <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/11statab/trans.pdf> (p.674, Table 1068), the following example is unrealistically conservative, because it includes only passenger cars, i.e. excluding all other gas-powered vehicles, i.e. vans, trucks, buses, aircraft, etc.

Example (unrealistically conservative):

- Passenger vehicles subject to surtax: 100,000,000
- Average annual mileage per vehicle: 10,000
- Average MPG per vehicle: 20
- Average surtax per gallon: \$2.25

- Annual surtax revenue from all states: \$112,500,000,000
- Time to generate \$72B for HTF: less than 8 months
- Total funds for Clean Energy projects and deployment after 3 years: \$265,500,000,000

The surtax would expire when stated, measurable, and publically visible fiscal objectives are achieved. Airlines, mass transit, and trucking would be exempt from paying the surtax, so it would not be detrimental to commerce, public transportation, air travel, tourism, business conventions, and so forth. Or, perhaps, simply, diesel and jet fuel would be exempt.

This temporary gas surtax might have positive side effects, too. It might encourage increased use of mass transit, car pools, bikes, or electric vehicles (EVs); it might encourage drivers to slow down and conserve gas (thereby reducing CO₂ emissions).

I'll bet most drivers and businesses could afford and would willingly pay the higher ceiling amount, especially when we know it's temporary and will expire when stated and measurable fiscal goals have been met. In my opinion, we can afford to pay this temporarily to help America regain its fiscal health and create jobs. For those who can't afford it, we have mass transit, car pools, bikes, or special exemptions.

Ask Citizen's To Voluntarily Pay Clinton- or Reagan-Era Taxes

I'm encouraged to learn that President Obama is taking Warren Buffet's "tax me" request seriously, by asking Congress to legislate the "Buffet Rule". Regarding Mr. Warren Buffet's NY Times Op-Ed, "Stop Coddling the Super-Rich", <http://tinyurl.com/3o9tlh6>

Here are a few mysteries to me that perhaps someone, such as Mr. Buffet, could demystify in a future Op-Ed:

1) Although "investment managers who earn billions... are allowed to classify our income as 'carried interest,' thereby getting a bargain 15 percent tax rate." Who or what is forcing these managers to so classify their income? This is a choice made of their free will. If a wealthy individual or business wishes to contribute to restoring America's economic health, why use the loopholes and "These and other blessings [that] are showered upon [them] by legislators in Washington...?"

Why not choose to calculate taxes using standard tables?

2) If, as Mr. Buffet states, "Most wouldn't mind being told to pay more in taxes as well, particularly when so many of their fellow citizens are truly suffering.", why do you (all) believe you have to be "told" to pay higher taxes? Why wait for a dysfunctional Congress to tell you anything? You (all) could choose to pay taxes according to the Clinton-era tax schedule (equivalent to letting the Bush tax-cuts expire). If anyone wanted to pay even higher taxes, one could choose to pay taxes according to the Reagan-era tax schedule (circa 1987).

Everyone knows the right-wing Republican controlled Congress will block passage of higher tax rates. Hence, why wait to be told, when you (all) can help the country now, by voluntarily paying taxes at a higher rate?

3) I disagree with Mr. Buffet (and President Obama) that only the wealthy should pay higher taxes. By letting the Bush tax cuts expire, Clinton-era taxes would be restored for everyone; and the increase in annual tax revenue would be about \$400B, whereas if taxes are increased only for those with incomes greater than \$1,000,000, annual tax revenue would increase only by about \$70B. As I wrote last December, 2010, <http://www.restore-integrity.info/content/Chess.aint.a.game.of.hoops.pdf> (p.3), Clinton-era taxes would not be that much of an increase for the 90% who are still employed. Granted, health insurance, gas and food costs are higher than in 1999, so why not modify the Clinton-era tax schedules to provide deductions for these necessities that now cost more? The net result is increased and affordable tax revenues that would accelerate reducing the debt and eliminating the deficit.

END THE WARS; REDUCE SPENDING BY \$3 BILLION PER WEEK; AND ASSIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL TO OPERATION REBUILD AMERICA

1) Bring all troops home substantially earlier than now planned. It's about prioritizing the use of limited financial resources—it's great to help others establish a Democracy, but not at the expense of crippling our own; it's great to help others rebuild their country's infrastructure, but not at the expense of letting America's infrastructure continue to deteriorate or obsolesce; and it's great to help those in need in other countries, but not at the expense of taking care of our own, i.e. the millions who have lost or are losing their homes, their life's savings, their gainful employment, and so forth.

2) Troops, after coming home and honorably discharged, can't then find themselves among the unemployed or underemployed. Give them an option: for those who have good employment opportunities, they can choose an honorable discharge; or any can choose to remain enlisted with standard pay to be deployed for a new mission: *Operation Rebuild America*. As Commander-in-chief, President Obama can so direct military personnel to engage in *Operation Rebuild America* without Senate approval.

Enlisted military personnel, with standard pay, could then choose to enter a Clean-Energy related job training program, to get a college degree in a Clean-Energy related profession, or apply for work in infrastructure renovation, infrastructure modernization, or Clean-Energy deployment projects.

Military personnel choosing to work on either Clean-Energy or Infrastructure projects would submit their resumes to a resource pool available to participating businesses or project contractors.