

# WALL STREET JOURNAL

## Too Much Energy in the Executive

### ***Remember when Obama accused Bush of grabbing power?***

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February 17, 2011

In 2008, Sen. Barack Obama criticized President Bush's effort to "bring more and more power into the executive branch" and promised to reverse it when he became president. All of which goes to show how different promises and policies can be. Candidate Obama said it was wrong for a president to consolidate power in the White House, but President Obama followed a different path, bringing more power into his office and at times taking it away from Congress and the American people.

The best example is the "czars" the president has established: 39 people who are in charge of specific policy offices, appointed by the president, but in an end run most of them not confirmed by the U.S. Senate. As House Majority Leader Eric Cantor has noted, there is a Great Lakes czar, a green jobs czar, an urban affairs czar, a TARP Czar, a stimulus accountability czar and a car czar and more. Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution says that "the President . . . with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint . . . public Ministers and Consuls . . . and all other Officers of the United States." Almost none of these 39 appointees have faced the Senate.

And it isn't just the Congress that is being bypassed. The Obama administration seems just as intent on ignoring the will of the people when it is increasing the size and cost of government well beyond what most people want. Washington spent \$30,543 per household in 2010, up 23% from the 2007 figure of \$24,817. Stanford economist Michael J. Boskin wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* last week that President Obama "is on course to add as much debt in one term as all 43 previous presidents combined."

Another example from Mr. Boskin: The president is calling for a freeze on "non-defense discretionary spending (18% of the budget). But that would leave the spending more than 20% higher than already elevated 2008 levels." In other words, the president simply wants to freeze his already increased spending, not reduce it.

Nor are state governments exempt from this treatment. ObamaCare will add almost 20 million Americans to Medicaid by 2019, estimated at a cost of up to \$190 billion that will be paid by the federal and state governments. The states will have no choice in the matter; Washington is simply requiring that they pick up the tab.

America's businesses will feel the pain as well. Tucked away in the ObamaCare law are many new regulations of businesses. Some are large, such as the federal mandate that larger companies provide insurance for employees under plans that must meet the federal government's definition of acceptability. But most interesting is the requirement that businesses report to the IRS every annual purchase from any vendor of more than \$600. Unless it is repealed, some 40 million businesses, churches, charities and municipalities will have to comply. Congressional Democrats shot down efforts at repeal, even voting down an amendment to increase the 1099 threshold to \$5,000. But the day after last year's election, President Obama admitted it was a "counterproductive" idea and agreed it ought to be repealed. The Democratic Senate has voted to do just that.

Another area of the administration's intrusion is the result of the Senate's failure to enact the carbon-regulated environmental rationing law that passed the House, the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. The Environmental Protection Agency is now looking at imposing on its own the regulation of carbon emissions. That worried Sen. Jay Rockefeller, a West Virginia Democrat, enough that he

sponsored a bill that would have delayed the EPA's greenhouse gas regulation authority for two years. It did not pass, but Sen. Rockefeller has reintroduced it this year.

But the best example of the administration's attempted takeover of America's economy is its management of ObamaCare. In passing the bill Congress actually ceded hundreds of decisions and specifics about federal government control of health care to the secretary of health and human services. Example: HHS can now decide who can get a waiver to allow low-benefit plans and who cannot. HHS in fact has granted 733 waivers--about 40% percent of the employees covered by the waivers are union members--and there will be many more to come.

Many things must be done to get America back on its sound economic track: less regulation, lower taxes and much better control of spending. Unfortunately the President's recently released fiscal year 2012 budget did not make any serious attempts at real fiscal responsibility, or for the American people's desire for real spending control.

So none of the important changes we need will come to pass unless we have very different and much better leadership thinking than we are now seeing in Washington.