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# Jobs: Boehner-McConnell Hypocrisy Blocks Obama-Conyers Action

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By Robert Weiner and Emily Kopp, Michigan Chronicle | Op-Ed

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It's time to call out the hypocrisy of House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and other Republicans saying that President Obama is "ignoring jobs" when they have blocked and continue to oppose the American Jobs Act. This bill, which the President has urged for three years, has a majority in the Senate but Republicans under their Leader, Mitch McConnell (R-KY), used the 60-vote filibuster to block it, and the House leadership under Boehner simply by his dictum likewise will not allow a vote. Congressional Budget Office numbers say the bill would add 1-2 million jobs and would subtract a full point from the unemployment rate. The chief economist at Moody's Analytics also **estimated** the American Jobs Act would net 1.9 million new jobs and slice the unemployment rate by a percentage point.

Congressional Republicans continue to push rich tax breaks and deregulation that the CBO and Library of Congress say are one-fifth as effective in creating jobs as direct jobs programs. Rich tax breaks and deregulation are like a triple bank pool shot – give money to the rich, which will be kept mostly for profits, but maybe some will "trickle down" to the workers – instead of shooting straight for the hole and providing jobs and training directly.

Detroit's senior congressman, John Conyers, Jr., Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus and Democratic leader of the House Judiciary Committee, holds weekly meetings in Washington with national organizations pushing a "Full Employment" bill he's introduced that has 56 cosponsors so far. At these Jobs legislation strategy meetings, participants have outreached to try for Republican support—after all, in past years, Republicans have supported national jobs legislation – but now everyone is finding that all the Republicans want is rich tax breaks and corporate deregulation which have done nothing for the economy other than set us back.

Michigan and Detroit's high unemployment and the City's financial problems would be helped by a real jobs program, including the American Jobs Act and Conyers' bill committing the nation to Full Employment. The gutted lots and cash strapped homeless shelters of Detroit do not have to stay that way. When Republicans allowed unemployment insurance to dry up on Dec. 28, 44,000 Michiganders lost benefits.

Boehner took to the podium recently to echo the refrain the press corps has heard the entire new year: "The American people are still asking the question: Where are the jobs?" He asked incredulously on Jan. 8, over a banner with the simple url - [gop.gov/jobs](http://gop.gov/jobs). The Republican weekly radio response to President Obama January 17 arranged by Boehner asserted, "Our economy isn't creating enough jobs."



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The GOP jobs campaign at best represents a flagrant display of hypocrisy on initiatives to encourage labor growth. They simply don't want to give Obama and Democrats the victory. Obama won his two presidential elections comfortably and Conyers won his recent challenge by 40 points, so who Republicans are really hurting are the American people and themselves.

It was 2011 when President Obama said in the Rose Garden. "I told Congress that I'll be sending them a bill called the American Jobs Act. Well, here it is."

Twenty-eight painful months have elapsed since the American Jobs Act's introduction, quashed by Congressional Republicans who bemoaned a surtax on millionaires to recoup the bill's cost. Obama even then was trying to reverse the surging income disparity of the last three decades where the top 1% tripled income in real dollars, but the bottom 20% stayed stagnant. Yet since Obama took office, Republicans have failed to bring meaningful alternatives to the table.

After the Jobs Act's investment in transportation infrastructure was blocked, Obama began to push for piecemeal votes, plank by plank. But the GOP systematically blockaded even such middle-of-the-road employment solutions as stemming staggering **veterans' unemployment** numbers, **stopping** teacher furloughs and **disincentivizing** outsourcing.

The Affordable Health Care Act is also an enormous job-builder, despite Republican propaganda to the contrary and continuous special interest opposition. Providing health care to 30 million people who did not have it, and covering pre-existing conditions and expanding benefits for 100 million Americans, gives the health care industry enormous jobs opportunities—probably America's best shot at a growth industry.

"Stop the political circus," Obama has pleaded. Earlier this month, Boehner tweeted, "No more excuses. It's time for Obama to work with the GOP #4jobs." Surely given the GOP's blind partisan intransigence on jobs, Boehner was invoking irony, or typing in an amnesiac haze.

Today, Boehner boasts of "dozens" of his Republican jobs bills awaiting action in the Senate. Speeches haven't included any detail on what actual jobs those initiatives might entail. The "[gop.gov/jobs](http://gop.gov/jobs)" site offers few clues other than—you guessed it—more rich tax breaks and deregulation. Their "Plan for American Job Creators" devised in response to the Jobs Act reads like a private lobbyist's wish-list, preening back the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency. We're puzzled how reduced pesticide controls and more generous emissions standards for cement manufacturing plants would make much of a dent in the jobs market, or do much at all except stoke the profits of a very specific special interest. Even former Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan admitted to Congress that he was "wrong" about pushing deregulation to spark the economy—it did not work.

Boehner has rebuked Obama in recent days like an errant student for "taking his eyes off the ball" of bolstering employment – despite the unemployment rate dropping from 10% to 6.7% after the Republicans stated Obama would not get it below 8%. Indeed, though progress has been made to steady the once dismal job market after the Bush crash inherited and countered by Obama, more must be done to encourage

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the prosperity of American families and to get back to the 4% that experts consider “full employment.”

Under Democratic Presidents and their pro-jobs policies since Hoover, there has been a 5.4% GDP growth rate. Under Republican Presidents, pushing rich tax breaks, the growth rate has been 1.6%: over 3 times worse.

*The Hill* newspaper blazed the headline a week ago, “GOP to Use Economy as Midterm Weapon.” Yet Boehner and McConnell have failed on jobs. If they seek to improve that congressional record they should start with negotiating on Obama’s American Jobs Act and Conyers’ Full Employment Act, not a hodgepodge of deregulation and rich tax breaks that have made the jobs situation worse and are disingenuously being sold as jobs bills. That is like a telephone scam you hang up on. Michigan and the nation deserve and require better.

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Robert Weiner is a national columnist, White House reporter, radio-TV commentator, and former spokesman for the Clinton White House and senior aide to Congressmen John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, Ed Koch and the late senator Edward Kennedy. He directed the Daily Press Briefing Room at the 2008 and 2012 Democratic National Conventions where President Obama was nominated.

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