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ABC chairman's message: U.S. adds 400,000 jobs in May

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On June 4th, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that the United States added 431,000 jobs during May. It sounds too good to be true, and it is. Turns out that over 90% of them are temporary jobs through the U.S. Census Bureau.

With job growth almost entirely limited to temporary federal government positions, last month represented yet another setback for the construction industry, which shed 4,200 jobs in May after growing in April. Undoubtedly, a combination of factors, including still tight credit and high commercial vacancy rates, conspired to reverse what had appeared to be initial signs of recovery for our industry.

Overall unemployment is still hovering near 10% (closer to 20% when you add the under-employed and those that have stopped looking). Although some of us may feel that we are emerging from this recession, the numbers show little progress.

Many in the construction industry were hopeful that last year's so-called economic stimulus package would be the shot in the arm that we needed. The reality is that our arm is still in a sling and desperately in need of rehab.

As a taxpayer, I believe another stimulus bill like the previous one is a waste of even more money we don't have. The President and his allies in Congress are pushing through an agenda that inspires fear and trepidation among large and small employers alike. Capitalists want to know that the economy is somewhat predictable before they put their capital in play.

No one yet knows what the health care law will do to business - as lawmakers FINALLY read the bill they passed, we find new pieces of the legislation that differ with what we were told was in the bill. "Cap and Trade" legislation is still being pushed by the administration and the attack on Wall Street continues with financial regulation being pushed and granting the government more power than ever before. All these factors, together with the expiring Bush tax cuts, combine to make the US economy a turbulent mess, keeping capital sidelined until it's all sorted out.

Barack Obama promised "transformative" change. I guess he meant high unemployment, discouraged job-seekers, the use of project labor agreements to funnel large federal construction projects to labor unions, and an electorate that's increasingly mad at Washington - and with good reason.

Add the impact the President's weak attempts to deal with the expanding Gulf Coast oil spill has had on his image, and you have - literally - a toxic mix.

The construction industry is chief among those for whom recovery - when it comes - is likely to be long and slow. The 400,000 census workers are like a cruel reminder of just how many people aren't working.

It is time for voters to make their voices heard. We need to get our economy moving again. We do that not by creating more government jobs, but by having a government set policies that allow

private businesses to prosper. That's the stimulus we really need. Let's make real "Hope and Change" a reality this November.

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