

Stimulus I Can Believe In

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President Obama recently announced at the National Academy of Sciences' annual meeting that he planned to allocate 3 percent of the gross domestic product to research and development. This represents the largest commitment to scientific research in U.S. history, and in more real-world terms, a better than \$400 billion investment.

Now, whether or not this is a wise financial decision, I don't know. Unlike our "leaders" in Washington, DC, my checkbook isn't allowed to function with the negative sign in front of it. However, such a pledge does offer a couple of unique points that I feel go in favor of the Obama administration.

First, he actually made good on a campaign promise. Granted, pledging to spend billions of taxpayer dollars has never been a problem for any politician, but allocating said funds toward initiatives that benefit both capitalistic and social causes is novel. Those who would usually scream in defiance of corporate welfare from such an initiative are hamstrung because this funding would also help educational institutions and venture capitalist-dependent startups work toward better addressing health and energy concerns through new and innovative products, designs and approaches.

Additionally, the heart-hardened right-wingers that I'm prone to associate with are left without their trusty battle cry of how the liberals are raising taxes to fund more social causes. This type of initiative would help corporate America continue its quest to pull our sagging economy through these tougher times with better, more innovative offerings that can help on a number of societal and economic fronts. Furthermore, one would hope that job creation and increased spending would be a natural side effect of funding such new endeavors.

Secondly, this marks a government investment that flies in the face of previous bailouts targeted at banks and automakers that have a weak track record, at best, when it comes to innovative thinking and financial responsibility. I guess my hope is that these types of funds would be reserved for those with new ideas on how to improve energy efficiency, or push developments in the electronics, communication, transportation or medical fields, which would help the U.S. position itself at the center of developing and manufacturing the greatest products in the world—instead of simply being its primary consumer.

Granted, it's difficult to say right now whether this type of historical investment would pan out down the road, but I feel a little better about this use of my tax dollars, as opposed to easing the unaccountable into bankruptcy. In this rare instance I find myself hoping that more companies would actually follow the example set by the Obama administration and look to invest in their own internal innovation-driven programs. Who knows? Your current project may even be able to

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Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

benefit from some of these new funding initiatives.

At the risk of continuing to preach to the choir, beat my drum, mount my soapbox or whatever cliché you prefer, these types of investments are what will bring this country back. My feeling is that if the greased wheels of our bureaucracy can understand that, although it remains to be seen if these pledges will be brought to fruition, just imagine how much better and more effective such an initiative could be if implemented by those who would actually be doing the work.

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