

Obama team uses flimflammy to inflate job numbers

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Labor Secretary Hilda Solis (AP)

Are you a financial adviser? You may not know it, but you've got a green job. Are you a wholesale buyer? You've got a green job, too. Or maybe you're a newspaper reporter. You, too, have a green job -- at least according to the Obama administration.

For months, Republican Sen. Charles Grassley has been pushing the administration to substantiate its claims of having created nearly 200,000 green jobs. More fundamentally, Grassley has asked Labor Secretary Hilda Solis to state clearly what a green job is. So far, he hasn't gotten an answer.

Now, Grassley has learned that, in lieu of a settling on a straightforward definition of a green job, the administration has adopted an extraordinarily broad description of such jobs that could include not only financial advisers, wholesale buyers, and reporters, but also public relations specialists, marketing managers, and many more occupations that have nothing to do with protecting the environment.

If federal money has created any of those jobs, then the administration can claim to have created a green job.

Last June, Grassley sent Solis a letter questioning an administration request for public input on the definition of a green job. Grassley dryly noted that the request came after the government had already spent hundreds of millions of stimulus dollars on green jobs. Given that the administration couldn't nail down just what a green job is, Grassley asked Solis how she determined where those hundreds of millions of dollars went.

In response, Assistant Labor Secretary Jane Oates told Grassley that the department's Bureau of Labor Statistics is "working to develop a definition for green job sectors and jobs." Oates also noted that the department has "supported occupational research that begins to define green jobs." She specifically suggested he look at work done by a Labor Department project called the Occupational Information Network, also known as O*NET.

So Grassley's staff checked out O*NET and found extensive listings of jobs that could be classified, for government purposes, as "green." The list includes: "arbitrators, mediators, and conciliators," "financial analysts," "financial quantitative analysts," "investment underwriters," "marketing managers," "personal financial advisers," "public relations specialists," "wholesale and retail buyers," and "reporters and correspondents."

Grassley was appalled. "These are, no doubt, respectable and needed professions," he writes in a new letter to Solis, "but their tenuous connection to the stated goal of 'green jobs' only underscores the mismanaged efforts of the Department's stimulus dollar spending."

The senator points out that money for green jobs comes not only from the stimulus but also from the Green Jobs Act of 2007, which calls for the government to spend \$125 million per year on "energy efficiency and renewable energy" worker training. The legislation specifically refers to things like retrofitting buildings, biofuels, and wind turbines. What do financial advisers, wholesale buyers and reporters have to do with that?

Grassley is waiting for an answer.

In a statement, the senator says he's a "big supporter" of green jobs. "But the government shouldn't cook the books with how it defines these jobs," he adds. "Taxpayers deserve an honest accounting for the nearly half billion of their

dollars being spent on this program. If the government plans to lump reporters, marketing managers, and financial analysts into its definition, then I'm afraid this is yet another area where the administration and the American people just don't see eye to eye."

For the administration, Grassley's discovery is just the latest in a long line of embarrassments on the green jobs front. First there was the controversy surrounding departed green jobs czar Van Jones. Then there was widespread skepticism about the nearly 200,000 such jobs the administration claims to have created. And then there was the unhappiness on Capitol Hill over reports that of \$2.1 billion the government has granted for renewable energy jobs, like assembling wind turbines, about 80 percent has gone to foreign companies. The stimulus has created some actual green jobs, but they're in China.

The promotion of green jobs with stimulus money -- a marriage of the Obama administration's environmental and economic agendas -- has been a top priority for the White House since Day One. It still is. Just last month, Vice President Biden traveled to New Hampshire to tout "good-paying jobs, green jobs, jobs that can't be exported."

It sounds good. But if you look a little closer into the administration's claims, you'll find they literally don't know what they're talking about.

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