



Time to flip the switch on government giveaways

By Jim Waters

General Electric Co.'s marketing pitch these days is: "Imagination at work."

However, following Vice President Joe Biden's recent dog-and-pony show at GE Appliances & Lighting's Appliance Park, I'm thinking a more appropriate motto would be: "Wealth redistribution at work."

Your wealth.

It's difficult to imagine that a company once represented by free-market champion President Ronald Reagan now employs chief executive officer Jeffrey Immelt — who [suggests](#) that Americans surrender their economic freedom and "partner" with government because "the government has moved in next door, and it ain't leaving."

By contrast, Reagan claimed the nine most terrifying words in the English language are, "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help."

Biden came to Louisville [recently](#) as the Obama administration's designated cheerleader for the costly, failed stimulus plan. Included in the handouts are nearly \$25 million in "advanced manufacturing tax credits" to GE to make a new hybrid water heater. A GE press release also stated that state and local governments plan to shell out up to \$17 million in handouts.

One reporter observed, "a cheering crowd" showed up for Biden's announcement. Of course, this union-dominated crowd cheered.

No one would have been allowed into that hall full of union-types who didn't think Obama's \$787 billion stimulus plan wasn't the greatest thing since the light bulb — or at least since the New Deal. Heck, I'm shocked Joltin' Joe didn't credit the federal government for creating electricity.

But what the vice president and most politicians loathe is discussing where they get the money. But that's the 800-pound extension cord in the stimulus room that Americans can no longer ignore.

Americans are rediscovering this important economic principle: Government cannot give you, GM or GE *anything* it has not taken from someone or somewhere else.

Stimulus money comes from taxes, borrowing or printing new money.

Not exactly policies to cheer about, are they?

This "partnership" between GE and the government leaves me feeling like I am cheering for the losing team in a blowout. The losers — taxpayers — must pay for a company whose business plan relies heavily on government money to buy company products.

That's why Immelt led the cheers for the [Waxman-Markey bill](#), which would have created a "cap-and-tax" energy policy that would decimate Kentucky's coal industry but that would greatly benefit Immelt's company – and its stock, down 57 percent since he took over.

GE's CEO has developed a business plan based on a near-total reliance on government money and mandates. Compare this to the nonunionized Toyota Motor Sales USA Inc. of Georgetown, which relies on ingenuity, quality products and competing through customer satisfaction.

GE is getting government subsidies to build wind turbines and solar panels. And it supports legislation that would force customers to use them. Immelt has placed the company in the untenable position of not being able to succeed unless it takes something from someone else — in this case taxpayer money and freedom.

While the U.S. Senate failed to pass Waxman's bill, GE's Immelt has been involved in helping write legislation that leaves out the "trade" part of "cap-and-trade" but still tries to cap fossil fuels.

Government can't even subsidize jobs without taking them from elsewhere.

While GE in Louisville was getting taxpayer-funded subsidies from Washington, 500 jobs were being lost at glass plants in Lexington and Niles, Ohio. And the Winchester Lamp Plant in Virginia was forced to close because of environmental mandates supported by and extremely profitable for GE. This is what happens when government gets in the business of picking economic winners and losers.

No mention of those ills came during Biden's charged call condemning anyone opposing such big-government programs.

Where's Reagan when you need the lights turned out on bad policy?

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