

Last Thursday, the Obama administration convened a “jobs summit” to tackle the daunting problem of high unemployment across America. While there’s no denying that the nation’s jobless rate is the most serious challenge facing our country, many are scratching their heads at the odd timing of the White House forum – 10 months after the passage of the so-called economic stimulus. And some are asking whether this gathering, which did not include officials from business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce or the National Federation of Independent Business, was really just a photo-op?

Back in February, when the unemployment rate was at 8.1 percent, the president promised that if Congress would pass his nearly \$800 billion stimulus package, it “will save or create over 3 million jobs - almost all of them in the private sector.” Congress complied, and now, close to a year later, Americans are still waiting for the promised job growth.

In October, the national unemployment rate climbed to 10.2 percent – the highest since 1983. While unemployment slightly decreased in November to 10 percent, more than 2.6 million jobs have been lost since February. And, over 15 million Americans remain out of work.

I voted against the economic stimulus because it lacked accountability and would balloon the national debt. Undeterred by the failure of its mammoth stimulus, the administration is floating the idea of another stimulus that will be targeted on jobs. Why was \$800 billion not enough, and why should we continue to commit borrowed funds to questionable programs that so far have done little to kick-start job growth?

Americans, as reflected by the opinion polls, are increasingly fed up with deficit spending, which has reached new heights this year. A steady train of red ink has rolled out of the White House since February – first, the \$800 billion stimulus, followed by the job-killing Cap and Trade energy bill, Cash for Clunkers and then the nearly \$1 trillion health care reform package. After indulging in this feast of debt and spending, the president has finally suggested that something should be done about the deficit.

As the president poses for cameras at the jobs summit, the administration would do well to remember the 10.7 percent unemployed in Alabama, including those without jobs in the First Congressional District. Just before Thanksgiving, 322 New Era workers in Jackson, and another 70 in Mobile, received word that their jobs will end soon, and 78 Goodrich workers in Foley got similar news. Some counties, including Clarke and Monroe, are at or approaching 20 percent unemployment.

The administration can show leadership on the jobs issue by reversing deficit spending and providing tax breaks for small business. These measures will help restore confidence in the economy and spur job growth.

Supporting Our Troops in Afghanistan:

Also last week, the president announced he would send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan to reinforce our ongoing military efforts to drive Al-Qaeda terrorists from their haven in that unsettled country. This announcement was the culmination of the president’s new Afghan

strategy which he has been developing since March.

General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, requested the troop increase several months ago. These reinforcements are vital to our mission to deny Al-Qaeda and their local allies, the Taliban, a base from which to plan future attacks against America.

I visited Afghanistan in February as part of a delegation of Members of Congress to view the status of U.S. and NATO efforts in that remote and mountainous nation. I was able to see the situation on the ground in the capital, Kabul, as well as in the countryside in southern Afghanistan. As I learned 10 months ago, more troops are needed, especially in the southern portions of the country bordering Pakistan which have become stubborn terrorist strongholds.

No one is wearing rose colored glasses - the mission to rid the region of terrorists is formidable. Yet, the consequences of leaving without having neutralized their ability to launch more 9/11 style attacks on our homeland are too great.

Unfortunately, the president's Afghan surge strategy also includes a timetable to withdraw U.S. troops beginning in 2011. While the president wants to motivate the Afghan government to comply with deadlines for training their own troops to replace U.S. forces, it nevertheless sends a signal to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban to simply wait us out.

We must support our troops and do everything possible to win the war on terror - that war is rooted in Afghanistan.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721