

Obama's green "investments" drown in red ink

Sacrificing taxpayer dollars on the altar of green ideology is destroying our economy

Deroy Murdock

"We'll invest \$15 billion a year over the next decade in renewable energy, creating five million new green jobs that pay well, can't be outsourced, and help end our dependence on foreign oil," [candidate Barack Obama pledged](#) in a November 1, 2008 radio address.

Three years and eight months later, as unemployment has exceeded 8 percent for 41 straight months, Obama seems incapable of keeping this promise. With the worst employment figures since at least 1948, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics' started measuring them, Obama has made a dog's breakfast of jobs – green and otherwise.

Consider three key Department of Energy programs. [DOE's website](#) boasts that its "clean energy" initiatives – dubbed 1703, 1705, and Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing (ATVM) – loaned \$34.7 billion and launched "nearly 60,000" jobs. This totals a staggering \$578,333 per position.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, private [employers pay average workers](#) \$62,757 in wages and benefits. So, Obama is "creating jobs" at 922 percent of the private sector's cost. Thus, for every green job that Obama supposedly spawns with taxpayer dollars and borrowed Chinese money, private enterprises could hire nine people.

Obama touts green-energy "investments," even though this is not Obama's money to invest. Rather than choose winners and losers, which would be bad enough, Team Obama picks losers. It subsidized at least [ten "clean" companies that went kaput](#).

- [Abound Solar](#) consumed \$70 million of its \$400 million Energy Department loan guarantee. The Loveland, Colorado-based company blamed Chinese subsidy payments and European subsidy cuts for falling prices in its thin-film-panel sector. On July 2, Abound Solar filed for Chapter 7 liquidation and prepared to lock shop and fire its 125 employees.
- Solar Trust envisioned Earth's [largest solar-power plant](#). DOE enthusiastically offered it a \$2.1 billion loan guarantee in April 2011, provided that it raised private capital. Interior Secretary [Ken Salazar](#) attended the company's Blythe, California groundbreaking and hailed "a historic moment in America's new energy frontier." Solar Trust missed DOE's benchmarks, however, and announced [Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#) last April 2.
- Energy Conversion Devices, a solar-laminate supplier, received a \$13.3 million [Stimulus tax credit](#) in January 2010 to update its Auburn Hills, Michigan factory and hire some 600 people. ECD pleaded [Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#) last Valentine's Day.
- Ener1 received a \$118.5 million [DOE Stimulus grant](#) in August 2009. Vice President Joe Biden traveled to Greenfield, Indiana to tour Ener1 on January 26, 2011. "Here at Ener1," Biden said, "we're going to harness electricity and bring it to the world, like Edison did more than a century ago." The electric-car battery company filed for [Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#) last January 26, exactly one year after Biden's visit.
- [Aptera Motors](#) aspired to build three-wheel electric cars. DOE offered it a \$150 million [ATVM](#) loan, conditioned upon Aptera's raising \$150 million in non-government capital. Aptera never convinced private investors to finance glorified tricycles. So, last December 2, CEO Paul Wilber stated: "After years of focused effort to bring our products to the market, Aptera Motors is closing its doors, effective today."

- Massachusetts-based Beacon Power Corp. received a \$43 million loan guarantee in October 2010 – DOE’s second such subsidy. The energy-storage concern declared [Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#) on October 30, 2011.

- Solyndra, the most notorious of Obama’s green-energy baubles, filed for bankruptcy on August 31, 2011. Taxpayers are liable for this solar-panel maker’s \$535 million in loan guarantees – the first that DOE made under Obama.

In death, Solyndra has proved to be anything but green. As San Francisco’s KCBS-TV reported last April, Solyndra’s Milpitas, California facility features metal drums marked “Hazardous Waste.” Cadmium, lead, unidentified black chemicals, and other [toxins haunt the premises](#). A company called iStar said it would remove these poisons — as soon as Solyndra pays its bills.

[Solyndra also discarded](#) still-valuable solar-panel components, even though selling them could have generated capital to reimburse its creditors, including America’s taxpayers.

- In June 2009, [SpectraWatt](#) scored a \$500,000 grant from the DOE’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory PV Technology Pre-Incubator program and \$150,000 from the National Science Foundation in June 2010. Facing stiff Chinese competition, this solar-cell manufacturer closed its Hopewell Junction, New York factory and dismissed all of its 117 workers in April 2011. SpectraWatt filed for [Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#) protection on August 19, 2011.

- Raser Technologies received a \$33 million [Treasury Department Stimulus grant](#) in February 2010. As its dreams of a geothermal plant in Beaver County, Utah turned to steam, its payroll subsequently evaporated from 42 workers to 27 to 10. Raser declared [Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#) in April 2011.

- Despite [Mountain Plaza, Inc.’s](#) 2003 bankruptcy, the EPA decided to inject [\\$424,000 in Stimulus funds](#) for that Tennessee company’s “truck-stop electrification” technology. Nonetheless, Mountain Plaza *again* went bankrupt on June 3, 2010. EPA officially awarded those funds [12 days later](#), despite Mountain Plaza’s insolvency and a related lawsuit.

These doomed projects alone devoured \$3.4 billion in taxpayer funds and commitments.

Rather than slam Mitt Romney’s tenure at Bain Capital – which deployed *private* capital behind Staples, Sports Authority, and other still-thriving corporations – President Obama should beg taxpayers’ forgiveness for pouring their hard-earned cash down at least ten “green” rat holes.

New York commentator Deroy Murdock is a Fox News Contributor, a nationally syndicated columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service, and a media fellow with the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University. This column was originally published by National Review Online in July 2012.