

**THE BLOG**

# How To Find A Billion Dollars To Pay For An Iraqi Jobs Program

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By Marty Kaplan

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I think it's swell that the President wants those militiamen in Iraq to swap their rifles for brooms and paintbrushes. (It'd be heartwarming if he's extend his newfound zeal for public sector jobs programs to American inner cities plagued by horrendous youth unemployment and gang violence, but set that aside for now.)

Bush's Iraqi jobs program is reportedly going to cost a billion dollars — a billion American dollars. Where should that money come from?

General tax revenues, from a supplemental appropriation passed by Congress? Uh-uh. The majority of American taxpayers, via a deficit that will haunt their children's children's children, have already sacrificed enough for Bush's war of choice.

Try this instead: Congress should repeal one zillionth of one percent of the cut in capital gains tax (or in the estate tax, or in the top tax bracket) that Bush gave the wealthiest Americans. That would raise a billion in a heartbeat.

Or how about this: The top thousand 2006 bonus-recipients on Wall Street each will contribute a million bucks. They'll never notice it — it's a rounding error on their monthly yacht & Ferrari payments.

Or what about: Halliburton and the other war profiteering companies whose fraudulent billing has bilked American taxpayers will have to pour their ill-gotten gain back into the Iraqi mess they helped create.

Or how about our dear friends the Saudis, the Kuwaitis and the rest of Iraq's neighbors? Dedicating just a few cents that they get from the price of a barrel of oil could keep Iraqis painting schools and cleaning streets from now to kingdom come.

Or maybe it's time to tap the patriotism and legendary generosity of the private sector. Richard Mellon Scaife, J. Patrick Rooney, Rupert Murdoch — your naming opportunity awaits you.

James Dobson, Lou Sheldon, Pat Robertson: talk about faith-based initiatives!

And hey, you oligarchs — that's you, Silvio Berlusconi; and you, Roman Abramovich, with your \$450 million in spare change to buy Britain's Chelsea football club. No one said the price of freedom is free; time to pony up, fellas!

While I'm happy to see the new Congress blast Bush's troop escalation as the cowardly buck-passing-to-his-successor-posing-as-shared-sacrifice con job that it truly is, why not give a jiu-jitsu embrace to the Iraqi jobs program as a chance for those who benefited most from this war to give back?

Over to you, HuffPosters. Any other thoughts about paying for Bush's Iraqi WPA?

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**Marty Kaplan** 

USC Annenberg professor and Norman Lear Center director