

IN ALL FAIRNESS

The Summer of Our Discontent

Whatever their philosophical stripe, Americans seem united in their disillusionment with government and its consistently dysfunctional performance. Much of this frustration lately has focused on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. This catastrophe, and the federal response, offers the public a teachable moment that demonstrates why bigger government does not mean better government.



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Devotees of government activism have expressed shock over federal failures with the spill. But such incompetence is far from an aberration.

On the federal government's watch, up to 20 million illegal aliens, including drug dealers, criminals, and potential terrorists, have flowed through America's porous borders. Unable to wait any longer for Washington, some states have been forced to take action. Instead of addressing their own shortcomings, federal officials threaten these states with litigation.

The New York Times recently highlighted how six years after the 9/11 Commission issued its report, glaring gaps remain in our homeland security system. If America suffered a nuclear or biological terrorist attack, "everybody would be winging it" at the Department of Justice (DOJ) — according to an inspector general's report on DOJ's lack of preparedness.

When our heavily regulated credit markets imploded, federal officials and activists argued that our financial system suffered from too much economic freedom and not enough government. Their immediate response — pouring billions into banks and other institutions — has failed to inspire much-needed new lending, and our economy remains in recession.

Politicians' longer-term response — a "re-regulation" of Wall Street — ignores the central role Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and their loan guarantees, played in the credit crisis. These two enterprises allow banks to make risky loans, and when unqualified borrowers can't pay, Fannie and Freddie absorb the loss. With the two of them now government-owned, American taxpayers are stuck with these liabilities — \$160 billion and growing.

We can no longer take government's accountability or its competence for granted. The public has now learned that Congress passed the massive new health care law based on skewed government financial figures. It's clear that government has no incentive to check its own growth or spending. Consider a *USA Today* analysis, which reveals that the average government worker makes 77% more than the average private-sector worker. The result will be even more government employees. Which begs the question: **Everyone pays for government incompetence** who will regulate all these regulators?

As public officials continue to make promises they can't keep, the public will become increasingly skeptical when government tells us it needs to adopt more controls and spend more tax money. Given its inability to competently manage current crises, can we really trust that bigger or more expensive government will prevent the next market crash, oil leak, or coal mine collapse?

It's never been more obvious that bigger government really isn't better government; it's just more.



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