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[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here

[Home](#)

**Stimulus "Mania": Is It The 21st Century Soup Line?
Between The Lines**

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The efforts to jumpstart the economy in the United States, in hopes of causing a global ripple, has taken on an entirely new meaning as people and industry alike wait for the \$787 billion dollar economic stimulus package to drop. It's like a "mania" as so many cities, states, industries, school districts, homeowners, small business owners await the economic "savior" of their connected economic realities.

The stimulus package has become "first option" and "last option" as the mania whips the nation into a frenzy and the markets creep off life-support. Stimulus-"mania" has also become the target of Republicans, who can say "no" to everything but their own party ideology that stills beats a nearly 30 year old anti-tax, anti-spend mentality of the Reagan era. This is what produced a trillion dollar deficit in the first place. The "greed politic," one that is creating the wage and income disparities of what President Obama called unsustainable "bubble and bust" markets, are elbowing their way up to the front of the soup lines in a way reminiscent of the 1930s.

Everybody is depending on this stimulus money. The real question is, will there be any soup left after the corporations and local governments get theirs?

Watching President Obama manage GM, AIG and the other market forces while continuing to promise a "tickle down" effect will do for now. The problem is the impatience of the collapsing markets that are forcing pink slips to drop quicker than stimulus payments can get there offer little relief to the masses. Employers say stimulus payments will save jobs, but only if the industry survives the wait. "Shovel ready" and "turn-key" projects receive priority on the stimulus funding list. Only so many projects are going to get funded, yet that doesn't stop the line from getting longer.

It seems to me that a false sense of security comes from the expectation that all will be feed from this stimulus effort, as all segment of the nation shout, "Do somethong,

Obama!" As the stimulus checks drop and the nation's various interest are fed, will they be fed sufficiently? Just watching the state of California line up has been an interesting prospect. First, Gov. Schwarzenegger publicly states the economic stimulus package will help avoid layoffs of state workers. Then Mayor Villaraigosa announces the same. Then LAUSD Superintendent announces the same. Unions are demanding the stimulus money be used to keep people working. That's just on the government side. We haven't seen the private industry requests yet, or the small business, or the homeowner relief. Every breakdown of the stimulus package is different, and the bites are so large that the numbers don't add up.

So, who's to trust it? Certainly not the American people. The mania is largely the expectations created by those at the head of the line. Soup is plentiful there. Those at the back of the line are still wondering when the payoff is going to come. And when will the line shorten up.

It isn't until the foreclosure crisis is resolved will we know if the stimulus package actually worked. We can put people back to work, and we can get America spending and investing again. But if the credit markets are still allowed to gouge and the money markets are still allowed to overcharge, then consumer debt will still be high and the American people will still be overburdened. Seems to me that the soup line will have to last an awfully long time to arrest the hunger of the American people.


The global economy will also have to be fed (that's a different line altogether) and the wars that suck so much out of the economy will have to be plugged (stopped). Then we can watch what a stimulus plan might project. Until then, what's there to get excited about? That the money's on its way? Not quite. The end of the soup line is the only thing that can get the nation excited right now and there is no end in sight. Just a mania to heighten the expectation of a "yet to be determined" reality. It's nothing more than a 21st Century soup line where you get in line and wait for better times. If the soup lasts...


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[Contents of Issue Menu](#)
Click Here

[Home](#)

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