

Money & Politics

Big Bird has bigger problems than Mitt Romney

While the GOP candidate may want to ax government funding for PBS, the Sesame Workshop has larger financial troubles.

By Jonathan Berr Mon 8:12 AM

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During last week's presidential debate, Republican Mitt Romney horrified some fans of "Sesame Street" when he said he was going to stop federal subsidies of PBS even though he likes Big Bird. Many pundits seemed to think the beloved children's character was headed for the barbecue.

"A collective stab pierced the heart of Generation X, who grew up with Big Bird, Bert and Ernie, and Oscar the Grouch as their best friends. I immediately thought, 'Oh no, Big Bird will be unemployed if Romney wins,'" Suzi Parker wrote in the [Washington Post](#).

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee formed "Team Big Bird" to rally the troops around public broadcasting, asking pointedly, "What did Big Bird ever do to Mitt Romney?" "Saturday Night Live" even allowed Big Bird a chance to rebut the former Massachusetts governor.

But they're missing a bigger point. Mitt Romney is not as big of a threat to Big Bird as for-profit rivals such as "Yo Gabba Gabba" and "Dora the Explorer." Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit that produces "Sesame Street," gets very little direct support from the government. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting awarded the show \$1.25 million in funding through a National Program Service grant to PBS in fiscal 2011 and \$1.4 million under the same program a year later, according to a CPB spokesperson. Those funds represent about 2% of Sesame Workshop's annual budget.

Sesame depends on PBS to distribute its shows and would be hurt if government funding for public television ended, as Romney and others have advocated. But PBS is just a gnat on the elephant of federal spending. Zeroing it out would not do squat to alleviate the deficit. A scaled-back PBS would prompt Sesame Workshop to find alternative routes to distribute its show, which might be more expensive and may not reach the low-income viewers the organization tries to reach. Though the organization has a licensing arm, it cannot rely solely on the private sector to fund its operations.

Though someone on Twitter created a [Fired Big Bird](#) account that has attracted more than 31,000 followers, dark clouds have been forming for a while over "Sesame Street," where the sun is always supposed to shine. Competition for the preschool market is tough and getting harder. Sesame Workshop reported a loss of more than \$10.8 million in 2011. [Early this year](#), the organization announced plans to lay off about a dozen workers, its second staff reduction since 2009.

Sesame Workshop reported more than \$132 million in total operating revenue, including \$46.9 million in licensing revenue for toys and other merchandise, in 2011. About 35% of its revenue comes from corporate, foundation and government support, according to its annual report, [posted on its website](#).

Like for-profit media companies, Sesame needs to pay top dollar to attract talent. Carroll Spinney, who has played Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch since the show's inception, earned more than \$314,000 in compensation in 2011, [according to the organization's 990 form](#). Former Sesame Workshop head Gary Knell earned \$988,456, including \$270,000 in bonus and incentive compensation. Knell became the head of National Public Radio last year.

A reality check is in order. Big Bird and friends have been around for more than four decades and it will take more than a cut in government support to erase the impact they have had on generations of children. Sesame Street may be a beloved children's show but its also a big business. The show's biggest challenge is attracting young viewers who have plethora of entertainment choices. Politics is secondary.

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Someone (jdmeck) 3 hours ago
Do you know according to Obo, Big Bird is rich and needs to pay more in taxes. Big Bird is a 1%er.
0 thumbs up 4 thumbs down | Replies (0)

Turth Hurts 11 hours ago
If it were well thought out, along with the free Phones Obama giving away, there could have been an

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1 of 114

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▼ Russell 2000	828.95	+1.03	+0.12
10 Yr Note	98.94	-0.25	-0.25



[BRIEFING.COM] After failing to hold above the unchanged line, stocks have slipped back into the middle of the morning range. The S&P 500 is off by 0.1%.

ID program with them. Do you think on election Day they will receive a Text "Vote for ROMNEY".

👍 1 | 🗨️ 4 | Replies (0)

Mickey82

14 hours ago



This is another silly attempt to take the eye off the ball, the only one that is important, the economy and jobs, now and for the future. PBS, including Big Bird has fat bank accounts from donations and licensing of products for sale. I don't want my tax money subsidizing what are really commercial ventures. There are thousands of unnecessary subsidies amounting to Billions, hundred of billions that taken alone, their apologists point out don't amount to much in the overall scheme. Grants to teach Chinese prostitutes to drink responsibly, shrimp on a treadmill, studying mating habits of spider monkeys, ethanol, green energy, and on into infinity. collectively, they add up to deficit spending.

The cover up on the Libyan attack, deficits, insolvency of medicare and social security, education, crime, tax reform, regulation, corporate flight to foreign countries, doubling of gas prices under Obama.

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👍 4 | 🗨️ 5 | Replies (0)

ollie58

14 hours ago



Oh darn PBS might have to stand on it's own. Surely the Obama Hollywood contingent will rush in and rescue it! Not. Those yahoos are too decadent to help a truly worthy cause. I would like to write more but I live where jobs are plentiful and qualified willing workers are few, so I face another long day tomorrow. However I am sure the libs would like screw that up so I could be as underemployed as their supporters.

👍 4 | 🗨️ 6 | Replies (0)

Mickey82

15 hours ago



Vote for Obama and you won't work at all.

👍 2 | 🗨️ 5 | Replies (0)

Dr. Kildearheart

20 hours ago



PLAY THE FLIP-FLOP PRESIDENTIAL DESTRUCTION SELECTION MACHINE, CLOSE YOUR EYES VOTE FOR ROMNEY, AND YOU WILL WORK FOR MINIMUM WAGES THE REST OF YOUR LIFE AS SLAVE IN A CHINESE FACTORY!

👍 7 | 🗨️ 12 | Replies (0)

Dr. Kildearheart

21 hours ago



Romney is a roll, he thinks since he lied so well in the Debate, making a jack **** of Obama, that he now has the 75 million of us on metal cages on top of his car, like he did to his poor dog. Wake-up America before it's too late to save our country, vote Democrat, or the whole USA will collapse in front of our eyes after the elections if unfortunately the crazy vote for Romney/Ryan!

The "Presidential Debate" scored tellers reporting on personalities, attitudes, and, lies, soon declared Romney the winner of the debate. Under what socio-political guidelines, human, and integrity, was the winner selected? The first stage of control for resolving the true winner, is "How many in percent of the articulated political statements weighted against the regulatory fact sheet were considered to be factual, human, practical and honest for the people of our country?" in this case a very large percent

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👍 9 | 🗨️ 14 | Replies (0)

indycrat

22 hours ago



make archaic cuts to government. Cut away to the bones. Give the 1% a large tax cut over 10 year projection/make Bush era cuts permanent. Raise military spending. Small gov't or infinitesimal gov't plus austerity programs. Return all responsibility to the state level. Also, loosen wall street regulations on all sectors and return to the 99' regulations. cut out 75% domestic programs. Create several proxy wars in the Middle East/Africa and begin to engage Iran with military option. Reset our cold war with Russia. Stay in Afghanistan for decades. go back into Iraq and return to troop levels pre 2007. balance the budget with an amendment to the constitution. privatize Social Security. Rid the Gov't of medicare and keep individual mandate. Take on China. defund infant democracies and nation build Afghanistan. Influence geo hotspots with military interactions. no taxes. build military complex. build private schools. send illegals to the back of the line for reset. get rid of the FED/central bank pass ryan

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👍 4 | 🗨️ 15 | Replies (0)

waraksas

Mon 8:26 PM



Don't know too much about Big Bird at all, but the Swedish chef and the spaghetti that walks off the plate----that was a goody. Where's Road Runner, Mighty Mouse, Sylvester & Tweety, Pepe La Pew, Rocket J. Squirrel and Bullwinkle, Natasha and Boris, Oil can Harry, and Dudley Do Right? There's educational TV for ya.

👍 11 | 🗨️ 3 | Replies (0)

Grey Ghost000

Mon 8:01 PM



where's the story on gas at \$5 bucks a gallon and shortages in California cause of Obama's regulations and EPA stranglehold and the states ridiculous energy standards? uh where? MSN SUCKS!

👍 23 | 🗨️ 7 | Replies (0)

Taxpayer 1

Mon 6:52 PM

Consumer staples are leading the broader market. Among the names which reported earnings between yesterday's close and today's open, **Costco** (COST 104.27, +4.62) is advancing 4.6% after beating on earnings. The company preannounced in-line revenues last week.

On the downside, **Monster ... [More](#)**


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NAME	LAST	CHANGE	% CHANGE
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Pound/Dollar	1.60256	+0.00154	+0.10
Dollar/Yen	78.32000	+0.06000	+0.08


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Wondering if #Romney or #Obama is ahead? Check out our list of unusual indicators, like coffee cups and t-shirt sales <http://t.co/94NadcYe>
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Gov. Brown tries to halt rising gas prices in California -- now at record \$4.65 a gallon. <http://t.co/hOghaWnQ>
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Investors are buying stocks this morning thanks to the drop in unemployment rate in September. <http://t.co/SrLSptWf>
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James, if CNBC said it , it must be true. Please tell Oblamo to stop outsourcing my income.

11 likes 5 dislikes | Replies (0)

JAMES-BOND-007

Mon 5:02 PM



On CNBC they said that if Romney get elected the USA will see "worst austerity programs" over his 4yrs than Europe, not growth as he claims. THEY SAID HIS PLANS WILL SLOW THINGS DOWN. If Obama gets elected, if Congress says "No" again to infrastructure projects like FDR had to build the economy then he will sign an exec order to get jobs. They think he will deal with the 'No' Congress as his first agenda.

PS: Did you see the Romney 47% FLIP FLOP, now he says he was 'WRONG' to say that the 47% are victims vs just plain ignorant. Romney key skill, FLIP FLOP !!!

18 likes 25 dislikes | Replies (3)

GBWatcher

Mon 3:03 PM



What would really be of great value and influence to children is to be read to, and to see their parents reading for their own pleasure and knowledge. For many years now, parents have depended on television to educate and entertain their children, and we can see how well that has turned out. Education has been degraded by parents who are too lazy or not interested in teaching their own children. And yes, I know that many of them will say I'm too tired after working all day. Sure, but you manage to watch television before you go to bed. Can't you read a little book to your children before they go to bed? And yes, they cost money; but have you never head of a library or garage sale or such? Many of the programs that kids watch are degrading their little minds and personalities. Have you put parental controls on your television?

40 likes 5 dislikes | Replies (2)

Patriot39

Mon 2:57 PM



Perhaps Big Bird could pay the Government back for all the royalties they recieve from toy manufacturies. Tax payers should not subsidize.

53 likes 17 dislikes | Replies (0)

scott flick

Mon 2:56 PM



What's the word Big Bird? (Todays word is "CANCEL")... Maybe the Big-B and "its" Liberal yahoo's should have remained neutral but „NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO. So now the yellow bag of feathers is gonna get the AX... OFFFF WITH (HIS/ HER/ ITS) HEAD I SAY...

Besides I think Big-B was having a thing with that BIG OLD EAGLE looking thing. Thats just sick.

16 likes 24 dislikes | Replies (0)

Musician42

Mon 2:41 PM



Really Mltt. Wasn't firing Daddy from his job (& sending it overseas) enough? Do you have to fire Big Bird too? Where are all those people going to work? How will that reduce unemployment?

Why are you so mean?

26 likes 74 dislikes | Replies (0)

canuckgeo1

Mon 2:20 PM



Poor Big Bird:
He came on scene when my twin daughters were one month old.They now have families of their own who watched their favorite movie actor(big Bird) for about 14 years or so.

To hurt people this way is a trait of this Mitt guy.eg. Bain Capitol and job loss of his actions.This is not the actions of one who has helped people for years as he claims but rather of actions for selfish dishonest , selfseeking gain.

He squeeks like his special undies are too tight. Honesty is only a word unless put into action by the perveyor.

18 likes 79 dislikes | Replies (1)

JB in Ill

Mon 2:20 PM



According to the above article PBS gets \$1.25 million from the government. Big Bird and his cohorts, Kermit, Ernie, Oscar, etal can pony up that amount and never feel the pain. They make somewhere in the neighborhood of \$175 million a year from toy sales and other promotions. As Romney says the government doesn't need to borrow money to give to PBS. Around here PBS is always having pledge drives and they are are not shy about asking for money.

86 likes 11 dislikes | Replies (1)

Musician42

Mon 2:19 PM



Bottom line, it's about education. There are those, some of you on this site, who believe education should only go to those who are worthy. The poor are unworthy because poverty is a character flaw. Those of us who work for a living are genetically inferior. We lack the gene for inherited wealth. It's only those who are wealthy enough for pay for it who deserve an education. Of course they get what they pay for, & the schools inevitably become diploma mills. There are several mills producing high school diplomas near where I live. It's similar to what happened to their businesses when they went from producing goods & services, to producing executive compensation & stockholder dividends. Of course those of us who work for a living pay for our kids' educations through taxes. More proof of our inferiority, since the wealthy pay less in taxes than we do by manipulating the bill of deductions. So who's pushing for class warfare?

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25

57

Replies (4)

Angry New Jersian

Mon 2:13 PM



Come on people really?? No one is saying it's the ONLY way to educate our children but have any of you seen crap that is on television now a days??? My children get 1 hour of TV a day, and I would rather them watch Big Bird than having spanish shoved down their throats!!! Cut PBS funding??? a little over 1mil, you have got to be kidding me?? Billions on top of billions are going to foreign lands to help foreigners causes and you want to take away one of the biggest and true icons and educators this country has left.

Get a life!!!! I wonder how many of you that want PBS funding cut have children? Probably none of you, and if you do, shame on you!!!!!!!!!!!!

27

46

Replies (3)

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