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HUFF
POST BUSINESS

Today's Job Numbers Show Why Job-Creation Must Take Precedence Over Deficit Reduction

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[Today's jobs report](#) shows an economy that's still moving in the right direction but way too slowly, which is why Washington's continuing obsession with the federal budget deficit is insane. Jobs and growth must come first.

The cost of borrowing is so low -- the yield on the ten-year Treasury is near historic lows -- and the need for more jobs and better wages so high, and our infrastructure so neglected, that it's insanity not to borrow more to put more Americans to work rebuilding the nation.

Yes, unemployment is down slightly and 146,000 new jobs were created in November. That's some progress. But don't be blinded by the hype coming out of Wall Street and the White House, both of which want the public to believe everything is going wonderfully well.

The fact is some 350,000 more people stopped looking for jobs in November, and the percent of the working-age population in jobs continues to drop -- now at 63.6 percent, almost the lowest in 30 years. Meanwhile, the average workweek is stuck at 34.4 hours.

The slowness of this recovery isn't because of Hurricane Sandy, which it turns out had very little impact on these job numbers. And it's not because of any uncertainty over the looming "fiscal cliff." Most consumers in November were oblivious about any pending cliff.

The reason the economy is still under-performing is demand is inadequate. Businesses won't create more jobs without enough customers. But consumers can't and won't spend because they don't have the money. Unless or until the private sector -- businesses and consumers -- are able to boost the economy, government must be the spender of last resort.

But the nation has bought into the Republican frame of thinking that we have to "get our fiscal house in order" before the economy can get back on track. Even though Barack Obama was reelected and Democrats gained seats in the House and Senate, that frame is still dominating debate.

Even though we're near a fiscal cliff that illustrates how dangerous deficit reduction can be when so many people are still unemployed, the White House and the Democrats seem incapable of changing the frame of debate.

Jobs must come first. Job creation must be our first priority.

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