

# **Bridges, and Government Agencies -- Structurally Unsound**

by Jeff Davidson

Among more than 600,000 bridges in the United States, at least one in ten is structurally deficient and in urgent need of vital repairs. The cost of fixing them is estimated to be \$115 billion, or two times the annual sales of the entire U.S. auto market.

## **Gargantuan Needs**

With 215 million vehicles passing over these structurally deficient bridges every day, equal to 2500 per second, the need for repair is more than obvious. While most bridges are 40 years and older, slightly more than 22,000 bridges, built since 2009, have some structural deficiency or are already functionally obsolete, including one in eight bridges in North Carolina.

Nearly two in three bridges in the Washington D.C. metro area, however, are functionally obsolete. Regionally, the Northeast is much worse off than the rest of the country. In Pennsylvania alone, 5,050 bridges are structurally deficient. Yes, you can drive over most structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridges but the traffic tends to slow down. There are weight restrictions. There are notable delays, and with the passage of time, the delays get longer.

## **Beyond the Bounds of the Constitution**

If all of this sounds like an analogy, you're correct. The condition of our bridges is much like the condition of our federal government: structurally deficient. As a glaring example, when a president can appoint an attorney general who

marches in lockstep with the president's every whim, politicizes the Department of Justice, and advocates for causes, as opposed to administering the law, it is deeply troubling.

In the aggregate, when the federal government grows at a rate that far exceeds any private sector of the economy, what is going on? When the federal government's amount of leased office space increases by an astounding 80 percent in the last six years, serious questions arise about the state of our governance. Why so much? Why so quickly? Why at such great cost? The population hasn't risen by 80 percent in six years.

### **Suddenly, a Super-Needy Citizenry?**

What has happened to the American populace that government workforce needs to nearly double in size a six-year period? How did we manage for the previous 232 years with such a comparatively small federal government?

The next president, liberal or conservative, must grasp reality: the federal government is already *exceedingly too large, spends far too much, wastes far too much, and in general is greatly over-stepping its bounds.*

Government is not supposed to be a babysitter, the guardian of all our funds, or the micro-manager of our lives. It is not supposed to tap into our electronic communication, and it is not supposed to contort information for its own ends. It is expressly forbidden to politicize federal agencies, to disregard elements of the U.S. Constitution it finds inconvenient, to rule by a series of executive orders, and, worst of all, to proceed as if it knows all and knows best for the populous it has been elected, appointed, or hired to serve -- not rule, not monopolize, and not dominate.

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