

Still just a vague slogan

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

January 12, 2011

[Good catch last week](#) by Pat Garofalo: House

Speaker John Boehner wants to cut government spending, but it's still difficult to get him to name any programs that should be slashed. This was a theme during the campaign and the lame duck session that followed; it remains true now that he's taken over the House.

Here Boehner insists to Brian Williams that the defense budget isn't sacred but then pivots to talking about how smart spending is better than the wasteful kind. But first he declines to name any program that could simply be axed--because he doesn't "have one off the top of [his] head":

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It's of course implausible that Boehner had lots of answers to this question but couldn't come up with one on the spot because he neglected to study his notes before going on TV. "Cut spending" has been his top talking point for months, and he's got a pretty good-sized staff operation helping him with details like "what do you mean by that?"

The real reason Boehner didn't answer the question is that he doesn't have a good answer, because actually cutting spending is a lot harder (and less popular) than saying, "Let's cut spending"--as I detailed in this recent [article](#) in the *Century* (subscription required).