

# INDYSTAR★COM

## John Ketzenberger: Look beyond kudzu for healthier economy

Written by

John Ketzenberger

6:59 PM, Aug. 19, 2011|

I have started to think of the stock market indexes as kudzu in the forest. And all of the static in Washington, D.C., is like those deadly emerald ash borers.

These things are everywhere and people think they're interesting, but they don't belong in the forest. They don't reveal anything, really, about the economy's health.

To get a better idea about the economy, pay attention to a healthy forest where poplar, elm, hickory and oak trees are fundamental. Together they compose a beautiful place of many opportunities. Properly managed, there's plenty of wood for shelter and profit.

That's true of the economy, too. The housing market's a mess. The loss of jobs and the lack of job creation slow recovery. The recent food fight in Congress over the debt ceiling and the wimpy debt reduction deal are more embarrassing than the nation's credit downgrade.

These economic kudzu and bored-out ash of the economic realm get all the attention. They're easy to see, understand and exploit. They're signs the economy isn't healthy. The forest could use a little help from thoughtful people who care about it and don't want to exploit its opportunities.

This is true of our economy, too. It's time to weed out the invasive species, to prosecute and shun the bad actors who harm the economy's beauty with their illegal and immoral actions. That would go a long way toward restoring the economy's true beauty -- confidence.

The political process has been weedy, too. The incessant, vitriolic attacks for no purpose other than power and political gain threaten to overwhelm the economy. It's hard to be optimistic -- to express confidence in the economy by investing -- when the great political breakthrough is the broken status quo.

Does anyone really think the misnamed "super" committee is anything more than

Advertisement



**Protect Your Home  
with ADT!**

**Click Here  
to Learn More!**

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER

The advertisement features a dark background with a silhouette of a person looking out a window. The ADT logo and 'AUTHORIZED DEALER' text are in a blue box at the bottom left. The 'Click Here to Learn More!' text is in white and yellow at the bottom right.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# INDYSTAR★COM

another Rube Goldberg device intended to do nothing spectacularly?

The economy, like the forest, can't be taken for granted. The fear many feel as we teeter on the brink of another recession has paralyzed decision makers. The result, understandably, is the anger we see expressed in the throw-all-the-bums-out poll numbers for Congress and the mistrust of business.

When I start down this path, it's hard for me to be confident about the economy and the future. Instead of looking for understanding in the data, I tend to wallow in the muck of today's politics. I find it way too easy to despair for our economy or our republic when I focus on the kudzu and ash borers.

I was feeling this way recently when Denny Smith asked me to be part of a panel for his radio show on WIBC-FM (93.1). Smith sent over a list with more than 30 questions, received from listeners, the night before the show with our panel, which included Mike Hicks, a Ball State University economist, and Mark Damer, a portfolio manager for David A. Noyes & Co. It was clear I wasn't the only pessimist.

"Brazil recently reset its whole economy -- currency was reset, taxes reset," one of the listeners asserted. "Is that a viable model for the U.S.?" How bad are things when Brazil becomes a model for our economic recovery?

A funny thing happened, though, as we talked through the economy's problems.

We started to consider the underlying strength that remains in the economy and the forest started to emerge from the trees. We concluded that if policymakers stop bickering and apply common sense and not political prowess to the problems, they'd go a long way toward restoring confidence in the American economy.

When Americans are confident about the future, the economy will grow nicely, which will fix the housing mess, reduce unemployment and create new jobs.

I stepped onto Monument Circle when the show was over and into a pleasant summer evening. I wondered whether it really was that simple to fix the economy.

That's when I stopped watching the stock market indexes and obsessing over every shred of business news. Now I see less kudzu and dead ash. I'm pretty sure there's a healthy forest in there somewhere.

**Ketzenberger is president of the Indiana**

Advertisement



**Protect Your Home  
with ADT!**

**ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER**

**Click Here  
to Learn More!**

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# INDYSTAR★COM

Fiscal Policy Institute. Contact him at [jketzenberger@indianafiscal.org](mailto:jketzenberger@indianafiscal.org).

[Get Listed Here](#)

Ads by Pulse 360

## Indianapolis: Mom Makes Botox Doctors Furious

Mom Reveals Clever \$4 Wrinkle Therapy That Makes BOTOX Doctors Furious  
[TheHigherLifestyle.com](http://TheHigherLifestyle.com)

## Six Sigma Training

Villanova offers 100% Online Six Sigma Training & Certification Prep!  
[www.VillanovaU.com/SixSigma](http://www.VillanovaU.com/SixSigma)

## Free 2011 Credit Scores

View your latest Credit Report and your Free Credit Scores today.  
[FreeScoreOnline.com](http://FreeScoreOnline.com)

Advertisement



**Protect Your Home  
with ADT!**

**Click Here  
to Learn More!**

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™