

THE BLAZE

Do we really need more teachers?

Posted on June 13, 2012 at 11:29am by Meredith Jessup

Mitt Romney has come under fire this week after **criticizing** President Obama's single-minded focus on the public sector.

“[President Obama] wants another stimulus, he wants to hire more government workers. He says we need more fireman, more policeman, more teachers. Did he not get the message of Wisconsin? The American people did. It's time for us to cut back on government and help the American people.”

Predictably, liberals have launched their own counter-attacks, including this response from the Obama camp:

The Obama campaign **responds**:

In Iowa today, Mitt Romney shockingly promised to cut jobs for firefighters, police, and teachers if elected. As President Obama urges Congress to pass his plan to put cops, firefighters, teachers, and construction workers back to work — after they left as many as 1 million jobs from his plan on the table — Mitt Romney has decided we need less jobs for middle class Americans, not more. That's the message he received this week.

I don't believe decisions about hiring/firing firefighters, cops or teachers should be handed down from the federal government. However, the private/public sector debate is one this country desperately needs to have and I'll applaud Romney all day long for challenging this status quo.

Romney's comments about the failed Wisconsin recall are hard to argue with; police officers and firefighters were exempted from Gov. Scott Walker's crackdown on public employee bargaining rights. Teachers, however, were not and teachers unions protested accordingly. The argument from the left is now, “HOW DARE YOU THINK WE DON'T NEED OUR TEACHERS??!” But how much do we *really* need to keep all of our teachers — or *add* new ones?

Take a look at the data — as you can see from this graphic, public school enrollment has minimally increased over the last few decades, but teacher employment has exploded — the public school workforce has grown *11 times faster* than student enrollment over the last 40 years:

And how does employing more and more teachers affect our students' performance? While the cost of education has steadily risen, academic scores have remained stagnate and in some cases actually *declined*. As Cato's Andrew Coulson **notes**, if the U.S. returned to the student-to-staff ratio we had in 1970, we could save \$210 billion... *every year*.

Furthermore, on a *per pupil* basis, the inflation-adjusted average cost of a K-12 education has gone from about \$55,000 to about \$150,000.

So, considering **these data points**, what is the Democrats' **case** for hiring more teachers?

“Not only has Mitt Romney opposed the President’s plan to create one million jobs, he is actually calling for further job loss in the sector that needs the most urgent boost,” said Obama campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt.

R.T. Ryback, vice chair of the Democratic National Committee, said “Romney’s assertion that the American people don’t benefit from firemen, policemen and teachers is so detached from reality I did a double take – I had to check twice to be sure he had actually said it.”

The Obama camp is employing a ruse, making middle class moms worry that their kids will go uneducated and their town will burn around them if they don’t support his plan to employ more public sector workers. But the Romney camp needs to show this data and point out how Obama’s rhetoric doesn’t stand up to the facts. Instead, Romney has been out there doing... well, **this**:

FOX NEWS’ BRIAN KILMEADE: [President Obama] says that you’re out of touch. He says you want to cut firefighters and teachers, that you don’t understand what’s going on in these communities. What do you say to that, Governor?

ROMNEY: Well, that’s a very strange accusation. Of course, teachers and firemen and policemen are hired at the local level and also by states. The federal government doesn’t pay for teachers, firefighters or policemen. So, obviously that’s completely absurd. He’s got a new idea, though, and that is to have another stimulus and to have the federal government send money to try and bail out cities and states. It didn’t work the first time. It certainly wouldn’t work the second time.

Thankfully, Romney ally & former New Hampshire Gov. John Sununu is out there with a clearer message than his candidate:

“There are municipalities, there are states where there is flight of population, and as the population goes down, you need fewer teachers. As technology contributes to community security and dealing with issues that firefighters have to issue, you would hope that you can as a taxpayer see the benefits of the efficiency in personnel you can get out of that,” Sununu said during an interview on MSNBC’s “Jansing & Co.” Monday, prefacing that he was speaking “as a taxpayer” and not a representative of the Romney campaign. “There may be others who run away from those comments, but I’m going to tell you that there are places where just pumping money in to add to the public payroll is not what the taxpayers of this country want.”