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SIMMONS: Obama's pledge of nannies for all

[Deborah Simmons](#)

OPINION/ANALYSIS:

President Obama has his own twist on Henry IV's promise of a chicken in every pot on Sundays: Nannies in every schoolhouse Monday through Friday.

The agenda of the president and his advocates is as clear as the welfare-state mentality of old: Governments - not father and mother - know best.

What these people want to do is entrench the status quo in preschool programs by way of a new initiative called the Early Learning Challenge Fund, which would provide federal dollars for universal pre-K schooling.

The nannies would then help usher in Mr. Obama's birth-to-5 project, which essentially calls for the government to raise your child straight out of the womb. (So you can donate your Dr. Spock book to the Smithsonian.)

Of course advocates don't call these people nannies. They prefer the term early childhood educators. That way, when collective-bargaining time creeps up, the Teamsters, teachers and other unions can blame a "lack of resources" when 18-month-old Sasha refuses to give up her sippy cup or 4-year-old Leonard still isn't potty trained.

So, who are these nannies? The garden variety who ordinarily tend to youngsters at preschools around the country and whose salaries are usually paid by the service provider.

Where would these nannies work? On a slippery slope - i.e. in the same public school systems that are doing a questionable job of innovative teaching and a lousy job of raising test scores and maintaining facilities.

Proponents of the birth-to-5 program tried to tie it to the health-reform package but failed. They tried to link it to the college-funding legislation, but that failed, too.

Now, with Congress laboring over reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, studies and summits on inadequate funding, inconsistent standards and the like spring anew.

Most supporters claim that wee ones fresh off their training pots and placed in the hands of early-learning nannies would get a head start. (Hmm, doesn't that have a familiar ring?)

A Cato Institute white paper called that premise into question in August: "Preschool can provide small but statistically significant short-term gains for low-income children; however, these gains usually fade quickly in later grades. There is little evidence to support the belief that large-scale government preschool programs are effective, by themselves, in improving long-term student outcomes."

Unfortunately, advocates of the welfare state stretch all along Pennsylvania Avenue.

The chairman of the D.C. Council, Vincent Gray, is an Obama man. Two years ago, he succeeded in shepherding through universal pre-K legislation. Now, in his run for mayor, he's hailing it as successful based on demand and enrollment figures.

How about that news flash? Parents in a city with double-digit unemployment numbers are utilizing a free baby-sitting program run by government nannies.

The male and female nannies will be responsible for making sure kids are socially transitioned and prepared to tackle kindergarten by age 5.

Whatever mom and dad can't accomplish at home during their busy lives, no worries: Uncle Sam's minions will be at the ready.

Potty training: Don't sweat it. ABCs: A breeze. Weaning? Hold that thought. Do you really think your breast milk would be in safekeeping at a public school?

Look, here's the deal, folks. The Obama 2010 budget proposal sought \$300 million for the then-new Early Learning Challenge Fund. Now advocates are pushing for \$1 billion.

Once a government spigot is turned on, however well intentioned the flow of dollars, it's never turned off.

Ronald Reagan made an education campaign promise, too, and you know where that stands.

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