

EDUCATION NEWS

An Interview with Neal Mc CLuskey: Is There Hysteria in the White House or Are We Being Lied to?

By: Michael Shaughnessy – March 1, 2013

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1) Neal, I have heard a lot of hoopla coming out of the White House. In my mind, it is comparable to “The Sky is Falling” . Let’s look at these cuts. Exactly how many THOUSANDS of teachers are going to be laid off?

No one actually knows how many teachers will be laid off, which is why the administration always says how many teachers — and that often means all staff — “could” lose jobs under the sequester. But even using the administration’s worst case scenario we are talking around 16,600 — 0.27 percent of all employees — a tiny trimming. And don’t accept any number the administration offers for how many have already supposedly been laid off. Yesterday, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was caught flat-out fibbing about pink slips supposedly already having gone out thanks to sequestration. When pressed to identify some, he couldn’t.

2) Which states are going to be the hardest hit, and can you tell me percentage wise , what percentage of teachers are going to be fired or laid off or whatever ?

Using the administration’s worst-case scenarios, which seem to assume that states and districts can’t find any savings other than through firings, Nevada will be hardest hit with a 0.51 percent reduction. Next hardest hit will be South Carolina at 0.41 percent.

3) Which state will be the LEAST hit ? And why ?

Washington, DC is expected to see no cuts, and I’m not sure why.

4) Is the data coming out of the White House accurate ? Or is someone using their BULLY PULPIT to scare the population?

As we’ve seen illustrated by Secretary Duncan’s utterly unsubstantiated pink-slip tales, there is a lot of effort being made to scare people. The fact of the matter is it is impossible to predict how many education employees will lose their jobs because public school employees aren’t paid by the Feds directly, and there are likely lots of ways money could be saved without cutting staff. All we can say for sure is that the numbers the White House has produced are tiny relative to overall employment, not to mention that school

employment relative to enrollment ballooned for decades before tailing off the last few years.

5) Where did you get this data from ? Is it trustworthy?

The layoff estimates are from the White House, and they are probably worst-case scenarios. The overall employment numbers are from the federal Digest of Education Statistics, 2011, and are probably pretty trustworthy but a little old — they are from the Fall of 2010.

6) Neal, why would a certain person be “crying wolf” and making a mountain out of a molehill ?

If that person is the president — or other politicians — it is likely to scare people for political points. There’s a reason President Obama loves to blame Congress for the coming sequester “calamity,” and then have other Democrats blame Republicans, too — they want the American people to blame the other party for callously inflicting pain on them, all to help “the rich.”

>It is what you should expect of politicians who, of course, want to win politically. But it is a horrendous way to deal with massive debt and failed program after failed program.

7) What have the teachers unions said, if anything? Do they have access to this data ?

They can certainly get it, and they of course bemoan the sequester. I haven’t heard them any more loudly than I’ve heard the administration, however.

8) Where can readers find out more ?

Check out www.cato.org and Cato@Liberty.org for all sorts of sequestration analysis, including on education.

9) What have I neglected to ask ?

Nothing I can tell.