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Both Sides Assail New Anti-Union Ad From Rove-Linked Group

Evan McMorris-Santoro | March 10, 2011, 8:35AM [Recommend](#) 240

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Policies Studies Director Chris Edwards told Greg Sargent. "And it appears to misrepresent the 42% statistic as if it were between government and private workers."

As Sargent writes, the Cato study is "generally critical of public sector unions." But Edwards laid out the ways in which he says the Crossroads ad misuses his findings:

[T]he ad's claim distorts his data in two key ways. The ad says that unionized government workers get paid 42 percent more than *non-unionized workers in general*, a charge that seems intended to turn non-unionized workers of all kinds against unionized public employees... In fact, Edwards points out, Cato's study compared unionized government workers only with non-unionized government workers, not with non-union workers overall, and found the first group doing better. In other words, even if the study's overall thrust is critical of public unions, Cato's actual finding on wages would be likely to persuade workers that unions are a good thing -- if you're unionized, you make more than those in the same sector who are not unionized.

Crossroads GPS said they read the study right, despite what Edwards, its author, may have told Sargent.

"Cato's report clearly states that unionized bureaucrats are compensated 42% more than nonunionized bureaucrats," Crossroads GPS Communications Director Jonathan Collegio told TPM, "which is exactly what the spot cites."

Collegio said he needed to know more about Cato's concerns, but he said that his understanding was that the think tank disputed Sargent's post on its ad. Edwards did not respond to request for comment late Wednesday afternoon. But his direct quotes to Sargent seem to suggest that at least, Edwards thinks his words were taken out of context. That puts Crossroads at odds with the free market think tank it used to back up its ad.

On the other side of the coin is the National Education Association, the teacher's union who is also featured prominently in the Crossroads GPS spot. The last third of the one-minute spot is a long quote from former NEA general counsel Bob Chanin's 2009 retirement address at the 2009 national convention for the union in

The big spending group founded by Karl Rove has succeeded in uniting unions and fiscal hawks -- in criticism of the group's new TV ad.

On Wednesday, Crossroads GPS launched a nationwide TV ad attacking the relationship between unions and Democratic politicians.

By the end of the day they had succeeded in putting the National Education Association and the anti-public sector union libertarian think-tank Cato on the same page: the ad, both said, is at best a stretch and at worse untrue. Crossroads disputes the claims and stands by its commercial.

Featured prominently in the ad is a study conducted by Cato, published back in March of 2010. As cited in the Crossroads GPS ad, the study suggests unions (and their supporters in the Democratic party) are out to "protect a system that pays unionized government workers 42% more than non-union workers."

There's only one problem. The author of the study says that's not what his findings were at all.

"The ad misrepresents the gap between union and non-union government workers," Cato Tax

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The speech has become a rallying cry for the anti-public union crowd, who say it shows the NEA is out for one thing: preserving union power, rather than providing better schools for kids.

It's "a system that collects hundreds of millions in mandatory dues to back liberals who support government unions," the ad's narrator says as a picture of President Obama fills the screen.

"One union boss explains," the narrator continues before the ad launches into this clip from Chanin's speech:

It is not because we care about children. And it is not because we have a vision of a great public school for every child. NEA and its affiliates are effective advocates because we have power. And we have power because there are more than 3.2 million people who are willing to pay us hundreds of millions of dollars in dues...

"Bob Chanin's quote was obviously taken out of context, with the intent of being purposefully divisive," NEA Executive Director John Wilson said in a statement. "Not only do these ads take Chanin--who is one of this nation's greatest advocates for children and public education--out of context, but they also misrepresent the facts."

Here's the full portion of Chanin's speech cited in the ad, in which the union says Chanin "was explaining why NEA is an effective advocate to combat attacks on collective bargaining, unrelated to NEA's obvious support for our children's well being":

"So the bad news, or depending on your point of view, the good news, is that NEA and its affiliates will continue to be attacked by conservative and right-wing groups as long as we continue to be effective advocates for public education, for education employees, and for human and civil rights. And that brings me to my final and most important point. Which is why, at least in my opinion, NEA and its affiliates are such effective advocates. Despite what some among us would like to believe, it is not because of our creative ideas. It is not because of the merit of our positions. It is not because we care about children. And it is not because we have a vision of a great public school for every child. NEA and its affiliates are effective advocates because we have power. And we have power because there are more than 3.2 million people who are willing to pay us hundreds of millions of dollars in dues each year because they believe that we are the unions that can most effectively represent them, the unions that can protect their rights and advance their interests as education employees."

Crossroads was unfazed by the NEA criticisms.

"Bob Chanin provided a breathtakingly candid assessment of what government unions are all about -- electing politicians who will in turn protect fat union benefits at the expense of unsuspecting taxpayers," Collegio said. "Thankfully, he said it in his own words so we don't have to."

Watch the Crossroads GPS ad, which is currently running nationwide on cable news channels:



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