

## "Pass This Bill" Not the Answer to Nation's Education Woes

Posted By [Rachel Sheffield](#) On September 15, 2011 @ 1:00 pm In [Education](#) | [No Comments](#)

About \$60 billion more federal education dollars. That's President Obama's latest proposal to fix schools—this time in the form of his \$447 billion jobs bill.

Despite [tens of billions](#) <sup>[1]</sup> in education bailouts in the last two years, not to mention ever increasing federal education budgets, Obama somehow believes that this next round of government dollars is just the answer to the nation's education woes.

[Speaking yesterday at Fort Hayes High School in Columbus, Ohio](#) <sup>[2]</sup>—in another rendition of his "pass this bill speech"—Obama decried the poor condition of the nation's schools as reason why students are floundering. And as reason why the government should spend money to fix them.

When buildings are...old, they start falling apart.... Some of the schools the ventilation is so poor it can make students sick. How do we expect our kids to do their very best in a situation like that? The answer is we can't. Every child deserves a great school, and we can give it to them, but we got to pass this bill.

More money for school construction to improve education? The numbers reveal otherwise. The Cato Institute's [Adam Schaeffer points out](#) <sup>[3]</sup> that K-12 per-pupil spending on school facilities has increased 150 percent in the last two decades.

This isn't to say that some schools in the United States are not in ill-repair. But to put the federal government in the business of school maintenance and construction is a blatant overreach of power into local government authority. It is also inefficient. As The Heritage Foundation's [Lindsey Burke notes](#) <sup>[4]</sup>:

If Washington funds school construction, it must pay prevailing wages, which increase costs, on average, by 22 percent. Because of Davis-Bacon labor laws, schools that receive federal funding for school construction would typically have to hire union workers, increasing costs and preventing non-union construction companies from having a seat at the bidding table.

The second portion of Obama's new education funding is to create a "teacher layoff prevention program," because, as Vice President [Joe Biden asserted](#) <sup>[5]</sup> in a conference call with the teachers unions on Monday, schools are "deciding whether or not to heat the school or keep a teacher."

If that assertion is truly the case, it leaves us wondering where all the prior bailout money has gone. It was just last year that Congress threw [\\$10 billion](#) <sup>[6]</sup> in taxpayer dollars into "saving teachers' jobs." And let's not forget the nearly \$100 billion the federal government pumped into the Department of Education only two years ago as part of the 2009 stimulus.

The numbers also reveal that, overall, schools are not facing a teacher shortage. [Since the 1950s, student-teacher ratios have been on the decline.](#) <sup>[7]</sup> Whereas in 1950 there were nearly 28 students per teacher, by 2006 the ratio was only approximately 16 students per teacher.

Using federal bailouts to "fix" American education has failed to improve schools in the past and will no doubt fail again. Rather than stringing taxpayers along on another federal spending spree, it's time Washington put control of education back into the hands of those closest to the students: local government and parents.

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URLs in this post:

[1] tens of billions: [http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/06/Creating-a-Crisis-The-Squandered-\\$100-Billion-Education-Stimulus](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/06/Creating-a-Crisis-The-Squandered-$100-Billion-Education-Stimulus)

[2] Speaking yesterday at Fort Hayes High School in Columbus, Ohio: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/13/remarks-president-american-jobs-act-columbus-oh>

[3] Adam Schaeffer points out: <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/k-12-facilities-spending-up-150-percent-in-two-decades-%E2%80%93-apparently-not-enough-for-obama/>

[4] Lindsey Burke notes: <http://blog.heritage.org/2011/09/05/obama-to-call-for-washington-built-schools-in-thursday-jobs-speech/>

[5] Joe Biden asserted: [http://biggovernment.com/kolson/2011/09/14/class-warfare-pandering-dominant-phone-call-between-biden-teachers-unions/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+BigGovernment+%28Big+Government%2!](http://biggovernment.com/kolson/2011/09/14/class-warfare-pandering-dominant-phone-call-between-biden-teachers-unions/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BigGovernment+%28Big+Government%2!)

[6] \$10 billion: <http://blog.heritage.org/2010/08/16/the-fake-jobs-of-obamas-government-union-bailout/>

[7] Since the 1950s, student-teacher ratios have been on the decline.:

**<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/05/Creating-a-Crisis-Schools-Gain-Staff-Not-Educational-Achievement?query=Creating+a+Crisis:+Schools+Gain+Staff+Not+Educational+Achievement>**

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