

MINNPOST

And still four more Pinocchios for Bachmann

By: Eric Black – March 20, 2013

The Washington Post's fact-checker, Glenn Kessler, apologized in advance for going after U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann two days in a row (and both for statements in the speech she made to CPAC on Saturday. (I wrote about the first fact-check yesterday.)

But, for the second day in a row, Kessler assigns Bachmann's statement a rating of "Four Pinocchios," the most untruthful rating he uses.

This time it's Bachmann's assertion that of every dollar that the government supposedly spends to help the poor, as she said:

70 cents of that dollar that's supposed to go to the poor doesn't. It actually goes to benefit the bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. — 70 cents on the dollar. That's how the president's caring works in practice. So \$3 in food stamps for the needy, \$7 in salaries and pensions for the bureaucrats who are supposed to be taking care of the poor. So with all due respect, I ask you, how does this show that our president cares about the poor?

As usual, Bachmann's office wouldn't respond to Kessler's requests for backup. He was able to find a couple of previous statements by conservatives that appear to be the likely sources for Bachmann's statement, except that she didn't cite them accurately.

For example, Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute wrote a book advocating less reliance on government to help the poor and more on private charity. Tanner referred to a statement by another righty scholar who claimed that 70 cents of every dollar spent by government goes "not to poor people but to government bureaucrats *and others who serve the poor.*" Tanner, because he is an honest and careful scholar, attached a footnote explaining what that "others who serve the poor" means. Tanner's footnote: "It is important to note that the 70 percent figure is not solely government administrative overhead. That figure also includes government payments to the non-poor on behalf of the poor. For example, Medicaid payments go to doctors. Housing subsidies are frequently paid directly to landlords."

Oh, OK, so when Medicaid pays the fee of a doctor who treated a poor person, no money goes into the poor person's pocket. And when the government pays rent so a poor person has a place to live, the money doesn't pass through the poor person's hands. Now I get it. In fact, if you think about it, most of what the government does for the poor does not consist of handing over money.

But Bachmann really blew it by using food stamps as her example because, Kessler discovered, that's one particularly lean anti-poverty program in which "less than 6 percent of the program is spent on administrative costs."

OK, I'm sure that to Bachmann's admirers, the fact-checking industry is just part of the vast left-wing conspiracy to destroy her. Maybe so, although I'm skeptical. But does she

need to make it so easy by showing such constant reckless disregard for the accuracy of her facts?

The full Kessler fact-check is here.

Video of the full 16-minute Bachmann CPAC speech (the overall theme of which is that while liberal Democrats pretend to care about the less fortunate, they are frauds and it's the CPACers and conservatives generally who really care) is here.