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BY JOHN HINDERAKER

POVERTY KILLS

The Democrats are running a ludicrous television ad that claims Mitt Romney is to blame for the death of a woman from cancer, because years earlier her husband had been laid off by a company in which Bain Capital invested. The claim is, of course, outrageous. But Dan Mitchell of the Cato Institute decided to take it seriously. If we start holding presidential candidates responsible for deaths, how does Barack Obama fare?

It is incontestable that increasing wealth also increases life expectancy. Likewise, if you make a country poorer, you will increase its mortality rate. (This is one of the reasons why environmental regulations that supposedly promote health are so often counterproductive.) There is actually a lot of academic work on the relationship between wealth and mortality, including a 1997 paper by just-departed Obama regulatory czar Cass Sunstein. So Mitchell does the math:

Obama's policies have dampened growth in the United States (according to data from the Congressional Budget Office and the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, actual GDP (in today's dollars) is \$836.6 billion below potential GDP). ...

Looking over much of this research, it appears that \$14 million is a reasonable middle-ground estimate of how much foregone income is associated with a needless death.

Now let's do some simple math to get an estimate of the total number of preventable deaths caused by the economy's sub-par performance during Obama's reign. Going by the lofty standards of Priorities USA super PAC, we'll call this number the "Obamanomics Death Toll."

So let's divide \$836.6 billion (our earlier estimate of foregone growth) by \$14 million and we get an estimate that Obama's policies have caused 59,757 deaths.

Dan is quick to say that it wouldn't be fair to hold Obama responsible for those 59,000 deaths. But there nevertheless is a serious point here. Under Obamanomics, more Americans are living in poverty than at any time in our history. Poverty, to paraphrase an old slogan, is harmful to children and other living things. Liberals often talk about money as though it were unimportant compared to the finer things in life. But in reality, as the data tell us, when you take away a person's money, you may be taking away his life.