



## Obama Proposes a Bailout For Teachers

Neal McCluskey, @Liberty - August 22, 2012

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Over the weekend, the White House released a “new” report explaining why President Obama thinks the Feds need to spend — er, “invest” — \$25 billion on public school staffing. Since July 2009 “the economy lost over 300,000 local education jobs.”

Where have we heard this before?

Of course! We’ve been down this road many times, and the President did get a tidy \$10 billion bailout on top of the original “stimulus” — with its roughly \$100 billion for education — as a result. Why not try again?

For the same reason he should never have tried: While no one likes to see someone lose a job, the fact of the matter is we’ve seen decades of public-school hiring and spending binges, ultimately without even close to commensurate achievement gains to show for them. Between 1969-70 and Fall 2009 pupil-to-staff ratios dropped from 13.6-to-1 to 7.8-to-1 — a huge staffing increase. Pupil-to-teacher ratios dropped from 22.6-to-1 to 15.4-to-1. Meanwhile, National Assessment of Educational Progress scores for 17-year-olds — our schools “final products” — were almost completely stagnant. And that 300,000 figure? It seems like a lot, but in 2010 there were almost 6.2 million local, public K-12 employees. That’s a less than 5 percent trimming.

In addition to the dearth of evidence that more hiring will do appreciable good, there are two other big problems. The first is that \$25 billion is a lot of money that we simply don’t have. Anyone notice the national debt is about to surpass \$16 trillion? And the second: The federal government has no constitutional authority to waste our dough in the name of education.

Frankly, this bailout idea is really stale, and we at Cato’s Center for Educational Freedom are getting a little tired of ripping it to shreds. But as long as people continue to believe that public schools have no money, and that someone else (hint: “the rich”) will pay the bills, we’ll constantly be offered such reality-be-darned proposals.