

## Opinion: Are Teacher Jobs Worth \$230,000 Each?

(May 28) — With summer fast approaching, pretty much the last thing on anyone's minds these days is teachers. But in Washington, lawmakers are rushing to shower teachers with a massive \$23 billion gift, artfully labeled the "Keep Our Educators Working Act."

Advocates, including the White House and leading Democrats, are desperately marshaling support for the bill this week, which they say is needed to keep about 100,000 teachers (or possibly as many as 300,000) from getting laid off.

Leave aside the fact that the amount of money is vastly out of proportion with the number of teacher jobs that will supposedly be saved — it works out to as much as \$230,000 per job. The real problem is that this will be just another case of throwing good money after bad.

Obviously, educating children is critical to our future, but this irresponsible behavior begs the simple question of why moms and dads lose their jobs while school administrators, edu-crats and teachers get unlimited job protection. Maybe it's because the federal government can print money without considering what it will cost our children. And maybe it's because the education monopoly is once again in overdrive to protect the adults at the expense of kids.

Whatever the reason, the fact is that for too long education spending has been out of control — massive increases with no corresponding results. Per-pupil spending nationwide, for example, has increased 60 percent since 1985, yet academic achievement is not improving with it, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics.

In Washington, D.C., officials claim the per-pupil cost is \$8,322 for the 49,000 students in its school system. Yet the Cato Institute says that if you do some honest math, the number is actually about \$25,000 per child, which is about the same cost as in Newark, N.J.

Yet both districts have some of the worst schools in the nation, and parents have lined up in droves to enroll in school choice and charter school programs.

Chicago and many other major inner-city schools make national headlines because they are so violent that children are hurt or killed going to school or even while in school. The dropout rate continues to plague many urban areas and rural states, as does the achievement gap, despite significant amounts of money spent on these schools.

Simply printing money to bail out teachers helps neither the kids nor the teachers, unless of course your real and only aim is

job security.

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The teaching profession — not to mention the children — would actually be better off if some teachers were in different jobs. It's always better to have a school full of good teachers rather than having the federal government prop up a system where everybody gets to keep his or her job — with no regard to whether teachers are good or bad.

If this president and Congress really wanted to help children and benefit teachers, they would emancipate students so their parents could use the tax dollars spent on their education to obtain educational services wherever they wanted — at charter schools, virtual schools or with a voucher to transfer to the private school of their choice.

But that's not really what they want. Instead, they want to maintain a status quo that is designed to benefit the adults rather than brighten the future of children.

None of this is going to change by yet another bailout or by doing the same thing we've been doing for the past 40 years.

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