



The Misguided and Devos-Deranged Teacher Unions

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When government-run schools next open, social distancing, masks, obsessive cleaning, etc. will be mandated throughout much of the country. The education establishment is claiming it will need a bundle of additional money to make all this work and, not surprisingly, the teachers unions are leading the cash-crazed charge. The American Federation of Teachers is demanding \$116.5 billion from the Feds, and that's on top of the funding needed to address budget cuts that have cost over 750,000 jobs to date. And to show that it is really, really serious about the demand, the union is launching a \$1 million ad campaign encouraging support for the HEROES Act, a \$3 trillion economy-busting piece of legislation which would include their \$116.5 billion ask, and a lot more for front-line workers, caregivers and basically every breathing American, except if you happen to run or be employed by a private school.

I mean, like, you have to draw a line somewhere, right?

Enter the teachers union version of the devil. Satan, aka Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, is pushing to get some of the stimulus money into the hands of private school operators. The National Education Association thinks this is beyond evil, and accuses DeVos of using the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to steer "hundreds of millions of dollars in public money away from public schools and students, and into private businesses and corporations." NEA president Lily Eskelsen-García insists that DeVos is "so obviously unqualified, unprepared, and has no interest in doing anything except corrupt education programs that were developed to help our most vulnerable, marginalized students, and to take that money and give it to private schools."

The NEA and AFT, you see, work hard to project the image that private interests are greedy, but that the unions actually have no self-interest whatsoever, and do everything for "the children." For example, on its website, NEA recently quoted political economist Gordon Lafer, who claims that "online education companies are like "coke dealers handing out free samples" in school districts across the nation. He goes on to explain that these nefarious companies hook lawmakers on their products, and try to garner funds that would otherwise go to public schools.

But is this the time for the unions to ramp up their eternal war on private schools? Absolutely not, many experts say.

Private schools are most definitely in trouble due to the response to the pandemic. Many parents cannot afford the "luxury" of a private education at this time. Church affiliated schools have a second problem, as pointed out by the Manhattan Institute's Ray Domanico. He writes that churches have not been able to hold weekly services for more than three months due to government mandates, resulting in a major loss of collection plate contributions. So it's not surprising that of the 60 private schools that have closed nationwide due to the pandemic as of June 12th, 49 of them are Catholic schools, according to the Cato Institute. Over 8,000 kids are

now “school-less,” and many will be forced to return to their local public school, like it or not. Without help from D.C., the number of private school closures is sure to escalate.

And about the last thing our government-run schools need at this point is an influx of students. As EdChoice’s Marty Lueken and Jason Bedrick explain, the cost of absorbing the formerly privately educated kids could exceed \$20 billion. This money is in addition to the \$116.5 billion that AFT is already demanding.

Good people can disagree whether or not the federal government should be doling out any additional money to schools. But if it does, it should not discriminate against privately educated students and their struggling families. At least one governor gets this. Ron DeSantis announced last week that Florida private schools affected by the pandemic and low-income families who use state school choice scholarships will receive \$45 million in relief funding, as reported by Step Up for Students policy director Ron Matus.

It’s interesting to note that the teachers unions have not come out with any opposition to the Feds helping any private businesses, only *private school* businesses. The same unions that insist we subsidize the children of people who enter the country illegally, now grouse at spending a nickel to help citizens who want their children to escape failing public schools.

While the destination of federal education money is still up in the air, the good news is that, barring a serious GOP hiccup, the insane \$3 trillion giveaway is dead on arrival. But to the detriment of American school kids, the teachers unions’ self-serving agenda has eternal life.