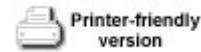


ABCNews.com Comes to the Rescue of Public Sector Unions

Reporter Rich Blake hints at 'new fat cats' but gives soapbox to union representatives to rebut 'unfounded' charges.

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Business & Media Institute
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Just because the summer is almost over doesn't mean the vacation has to end, especially for public school teachers.

In an August 12 [ABCNews.com](#) story, reporter Rich Blake raised an intriguing question: are civil servants the new "fat cats?" While Blake's story teased a John Stossel-esque exposé, in reality, he gave public workers a forum to defend themselves from criticism.

"They [public sector employees] once commonly were viewed as the salt-of-the-earth backbone of America," Blake wrote. "But now, they are more often than not being portrayed as a boilerplate around taxpayers' necks."

The mainstream media certainly isn't portraying them as a "boilerplate." However, Republican lawmakers have called out public sector employees, most recently in the recent \$26 billion jobs bill, which critics labeled a "[union bailout](#)."

Blake gave John Shune of the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities a podium to "point out" why the animosity towards the public sector is "unfounded." Additionally, Blake interviewed John Abraham from the American Federation of Teacher's to defend the teacher's union.



"Trust me, teachers are hardly retiring with golden parachutes and living out their years floating on yachts," Abraham said.

Furthermore, Blake quoted another union president, John Langyel of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, to defend his union against a [Wall Street Journal](#) story about the union refusing to accept a cheaper healthcare package, resulting in layoffs. Blake didn't push Langyel, and Langyel simply called the WSJ article "a complete distortion."

Buried in the last three paragraphs of the report is a note about how the Portage Public School District in Portage, Michigan, closed their budget gap without stimulus help by offering early retirements and asking teachers to cover one more class.

Andrew J. Coulson, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, told the Business & Media Institute student achievement remains unchanged despite increased spending on public schools.

"If we went back to the staff-student ratio in 1980, we'd save \$146 billion for the same results," said Coulson. "Public school employment has grown ten times since 1970 but student achievement has remained flat."

Coulson echoed Republican criticism about the recent jobs bill.

"It [passing the bill] was a combination of ideological blindness and appeasement to the

teachers' union," Coulson said.

Unions have long been a "boilerplate around taxpayers' necks," but Fox News is the only network that's challenged unions. The [UAW choked the auto industry](#) and [teachers' unions picket](#) despite above average compensation. While the media continue to fight off the "negative perception," perhaps the American people are beginning to see the true union fat cats.

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