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## The Case for the 'Teacher Bailout'

By *HEATHER HORN* on May 28, 2010 3:10pm

Recent [worries](#) over the [deficit](#), combined with [concerns](#) about [education reform](#), have left commentators wary of further spending on teachers. So the Democratic plan to give \$23 billion payout to public school teachers has attracted some [negative attention](#). But Friday in The Washington Post, chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers [Christina Romer](#) defends the proposal, and it turns out she's not alone. In the recent debate over what has been called a "teacher bailout," a surprising number of op-eds and blog posts have been making the case for this new spending. Here's a sample:

- **'Yes, We All Understand That Our Deficit Is Too Large,'** [Christina Romer](#) assures readers. But "hundreds of thousands of public school teachers are likely to be laid off over the next few months" due to budget cuts. "As many as one out of every 15 teachers could receive a pink slip this summer," and "such layoffs are terrible for teachers, for communities and, most important, for students." Meanwhile, the lost income in teachers' households translates to less spending on local businesses. "Additional federal aid targeted at preventing these layoffs can play a critical role in combating the crisis."
- **Earth to Deficit Hawks: We're Still In Recession** [Harold Meyerson](#) also makes the pro-stimulus case in the Washington Post. He wonders what members of the opposition in Congress "see as the plausible engine of economic recovery," without the package and if they've considered "what effect ... laying off as many as 300,000 teachers [will] have on the education of American children."
- **We Bailed Out Wall Street--Why Not Our Kids?** [Randi Weingarten](#), president of American Federation of Teachers, writes in The Wall Street Journal about the dire straights of teachers and students in school districts faced with spending cuts.

*genuine school reform can't be accomplished with fewer teachers, unmanageable class sizes, and fewer intervention programs for struggling students. Children don't have a pause button--they need a great education during good economic times and bad. The federal government didn't let Wall Street fail. Why would we do less for our public schools, which undeniably are too important to fail?*

- **Some Perspective: What the Dire Warnings Don't Mention** [Neil McCluskey](#) in response to Weingarten, though, points out that "the projected cuts would be but a tiny step back after decades of spending and staffing leaps." To his eyes, "we've been pouring money and people into schools for decades without producing any improvements." Thus, the real "education catastrophe" isn't about "funding or job cuts," but rather "the bailout now moving through Congress that ignores the reality of inefficient public schooling, and adds to the already crushing burden of our federal debt."
- **'Well, If We're Playing the Put-It-In-Context Game'** The Atlantic's [Derek Thompson](#), responding to McCluskey, notes in turn that "\$23 billion is 'only' 0.6% of the 2010 budget. An

unfortunate bailout, perhaps, but hardly catastrophic, especially when you consider that 200,000 lost jobs has a tangible cost on its own: to local demand, to student achievement, and to federal coffers when more people become eligible for benefits like unemployment insurance." He also offers an analogy: "At the risk of invoking a cliché, our education system is a bit like a painkiller junkie who just had his wisdom teeth pulled. In the long term, we probably want to wean the patient off drugs. In the short term, the patient happens to be in dire need of some drugs."

## The Debate

- [Prevent Layoffs](#) *Christina Romer, The Washington Post*
- [The Teacher Bailout](#) *Derek Thompson, The Atlantic*

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