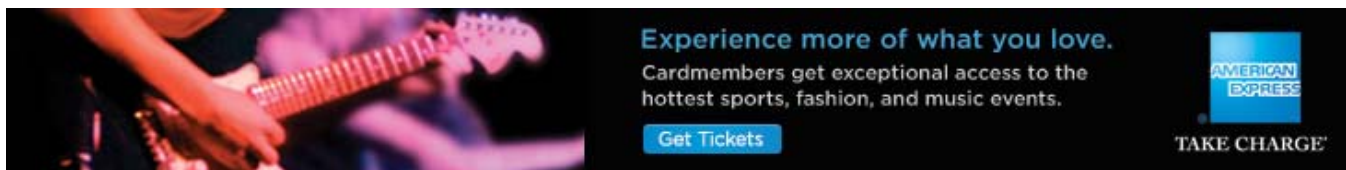


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## December 26, 2010

NEAL MCCLUSKEY: Hurrah for 'Draconian' Education Cuts!

For far too long, almost anything related to education has seen pretty regular, sizeable funding increases due largely to the simplistic — and easily demagogued — notion that spending more money on education must be good. Anyone opposing such increases has generally been attacked as a fool or heartless ideologue. But here's the thing: All this spending has produced little if any discernable good! In higher ed, it has mainly encouraged more and more people to pursue degrees that they either don't need, can't handle, or that don't signify much learning, all while enabling colleges to raise their prices to capture the aid increases! In other words, all the magical thinking about education spending notwithstanding, the evidence strongly suggests that more spending ultimately does little educational good while bleeding taxpayers dry and expanding our utterly unsustainable debt.

So let's get those "draconian" cuts going, and maybe even have an honest discussion of what really happens when government spends on "education."

It is better to be educated than ignorant, but not all spending on educational institutions actually results in more or better education. Indeed, in some cases the return may be negative . . . .

UPDATE: Reader Bart Hall emails:

We are somewhat poorly served by applying the term "education" to what is now much more properly referenced as "schooling." Those two used to overlap almost completely, and some

the the greatest damage wrought by easy funding with other people's money is that from pre-K to Ph.D. schools these days offer bloody little real education apart from the sciences and engineering. Things are likely to change.

Eight hundred years ago education was controlled by the church. Groups of independent scholars, using Latin as a common language, began to congregate apart from the church to pursue a true education. By mid-12th century this grew into the university movement — Hic et ubique terrarum (here and anyplace on earth) as they said in Paris in 1163. It took a century or so, but by AD 1400 the church no longer controlled education.

In our time education is controlled by the universities and their lower level minions. Once again groups of independent scholars, using English as a common language have begun to congregate apart from the universities — internet, home-schoolers, independent researchers, and many others — to pursue a true education. The pattern is repeating, for the very same reasons. Hic et ubique terrarum indeed.

t won't take a century this time.

Posted by Glenn Reynolds at 8:30 am