Education Spending Won't Create Jobs

by Phyllis Schlafly April 1, 2011

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Contrary to Obama's political rhetoric, more taxpayer spending to send more students to college will not reduce unemployment or improve the economy. It's just Obama's way of finagling the unemployment statistics by listing young people as students instead of as unemployed.

A report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland confirmed that when it comes to long-term unemployment, the length of unemployment is unrelated to education level. Although employment is higher for people with more years of education, the duration of unemployment is the same for all education levels.

A new phrase is now commonly included in job ads for all kinds of positions: "must be currently employed." Charts from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show remarkably parallel lines for the duration of unemployment of Americans age 25 and older who have less than a high school diploma, only a high school diploma, some college, or a college degree.

The Obama Administration continues to propagate the falsehood that solving the unemployment problem requires "more investments in education." Investment is a favorite liberal code word for more spending and higher taxes.

As globalization spread and was touted by the elites as the wave of the future, conventional wisdom was that only blue-collar manufacturing jobs would be sent overseas while college grads were safe. That assumption is now obsolete, as computers and telecommunications have made it possible to offshore the jobs of college-educated employees.

I thought it was a tossup as to which was the greatest education scandal: the $2 trillion taxpayers poured into public schools that failed the twin goals of improving

student achievement and closing the gap between higher-income and lower-income students, OR the colossal debt students accumulate to pay exorbitant college tuition prices. But the Chronicle of Higher Education reported a third scandal under the headline "The Great College-Degree Scam."

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The Center for College Affordability and Productivity (CCAP) found that approximately 60% of the increase in the number of college graduates from 1992 to 2008 now work in relatively low-skilled jobs that need only a high school diploma or less. The actual count is 17.4 million college grads working in occupations that the Bureau of Labor Statistics classifies as not requiring college, such as cashier, waiter, waitress, or bartender.

Facts do not deter the Obama Administration from playing the false tune that more federal education spending is the key to more jobs. White House Domestic Policy Adviser Melody Barnes reprised this myth with a stream of buzzwords: education is the "key to winning the future," we need to "improve educational outcomes" so we can "win in the global marketplace," we must "out-educate the world" and put "greater emphasis on critical thinking and collaborative problem solving," and grab "our generation's 'Sputnik moment.'"

Vice President Joe Biden joined in this campaign by launching his "College Completion Tool Kit," a bunch of expensive suggestions to increase the number of college graduates by 50 percent. He wants to shift the focus from high school completion to college completion and, of course, do more to subsidize the latter.

Biden was the lead speaker at "The First Annual Building a Grad Nation Summit" held in Washington in March, to be followed by a similar summit held by each

governor. The plan sets forth vague goals such as developing an action plan, using data to drive decision making, accelerating learning, and relabeling "remedial" courses in college as "developmental."

Of course, Biden's plan calls for extravagant taxpayer handouts such as the First in the World initiative to support "innovative practices," and College Completion Incentive Grants to reward states for undertaking "reforms." That's on top of money already committed by the Obama Administration, such as $40 billion more in Pell grants, a 90 percent increase in tax incentives through the American Opportunity Tax credit, making it easier for students to get grants and loans, and forgiving the college debt of students who promise ten years of public service.

Why should taxpayers be forced to continue unaffordable deficit spending to send more kids to college when the evidence shows that our economy is not offering enough jobs for college graduates now?

The biggest issue today is the need to rebuild an economy that offers the three-fourths of Americans without a college degree jobs which pay enough to buy a home and support a wife raising their own children. Somehow we lost that kind of a society through a combination of feminism, unilateral divorce, illegal and legal immigration, and the steady drumbeat of free-trade elitists telling us that globalism makes it our duty to compete with foreigners willing to work for as little as 30 cents an hour with no benefits.

The party that has the best solution to the jobs issue will win in 2012. More years of taxpayer-funded schooling are not the answer.