Obama's Pre-K Power Grab

by Phyllis Schlafly

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Under the media's radar, Obama has been aggressively promoting one of his fiscally extravagant projects announced in his 2013 State of the Union Address: "preschool available to every single child in America." The plan for the federal government to take over the care of preschool children, a longtime goal of the feminists that used to be called universal child care, is now (probably to sound academic) called Pre-K.

The Obama Administration downplays the $75 billion initial cost of Pre-K by claiming it can be covered by raising the federal tax on cigarettes from $1.01 to $1.95. But cigarette taxes were hiked just a few years ago, and this massive sales tax falls harder on low-income Americans.

The game plan is to bait the states into accepting this expensive Pre-K plan by offering them bundles of new federal money, such as $308 million in grants dangled in front of Texas for just one year, requiring only a one-tenth match by the state. Of course, big blue-state California would receive the most funding, $334 million in the first year.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan was asked if he could re-direct existing federal education funds to cover the cost of Pre-K. No, Obama wants "a massive influx of resources" instead of using existing funds more efficiently.

Duncan has become a peripatetic salesman for Obama's "Pre-K for All" initiative, traveling to make his sales talk personally to Republican governors in Georgia, Michigan and Virginia, with Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio and Minnesota on his future travel schedule. The game plan is to sell Republican governors on agreeing to take the money and then to lobby Republican Members of Congress to vote for the necessary tax increase.

Four years ago, the Obama plan to take control of education received a windfall, $4.3 billion from the Stimulus fund without strings. That money was used largely to finance another Obama plan, Race to the Top, which in turn was used to coopt the states into signing on to the unpopular national standards called

Common Core.

The presumed goal of pre-kindergarten classes is to close or narrow the academic gap between poor and privileged kids when they enter kindergarten. However, the billions of dollars spent for that purpose for many years have done nothing to achieve that goal.

The principal reason for the gap is the difference between kids who live with their own mother and father and those who don't. There are no plans to reduce the tremendous financial incentives of taxpayers' money doled out that discourage marriage and incentivize illegitimacy.

In 2010 the Department of Health and Human Services released its long-awaited Head Start Impact Study, which tracked the progress of Head Start kids through kindergarten and first grade. HHS reported little or no positive effect, and even some harmful effects, but Obama wants a massively expanded Head Start program anyway.

Education Liberty Watch reported a study in which "researchers concluded that pre-school has a positive impact on reading and mathematics scores in the short term and a negative effect on behavior. While the positive academic impacts mostly fade away by the spring of the first grade, the negative effects persist into the later grades."

The longtime political campaign to impose universal taxpayer-paid daycare originated from the feminist notion that the patriarchy oppresses women by expecting them to care for their own babies. Feminists insist that child care is demeaning to educated women and must be taken over by the taxpayers in order to liberate women from patriarchal oppression.

The feminists made a major effort to achieve universal child care with the Mondale Child Development bill in 1971. After a tsunami of public opposition, it was famously vetoed by President Nixon because it would have committed "the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against the family-centered approach."

The feminists are still whining in 2013 speeches, commentaries and TV interviews about Nixon's 1971 veto. A feminist article in the New York Times this year claimed that Obama's Pre-K proposal is a resurrection of Mondale's bill.

Supporters of expanding government-funded preschool programs argue that “a commitment to pre-kindergarten is a commitment to national security,” because pre-K programs will supposedly increase high school graduation rates, decrease crime, and combat obesity, thus removing many obstacles that keep people out of the military. But Pre-K supporters do not provide any evidence for that theory.

The Obama Administration’s real motives in funding pre-K are based on the leftist plan to take over what has traditionally been the duty of families. Duncan warned about the “challenge” of our culture (horrors!) “where people … prefer … the grandmother, the neighbor” to the government when deciding to whom their young children should be entrusted.