



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on January 26, 2015

Obama Tax Policy Shows Bias Against Stay-at-home Moms

If there's one thing political "progressives" despise, it's discrimination. And not just the old-fashioned kind, like discrimination against minorities in housing, hiring, public accommodations, etc. No, today legislatures are guilty of discrimination against women if they enact any limitation at all on "abortion rights"; parents are "homophobes" if they object to having their children taught in their tax-supported schools that all "lifestyles" are morally equal; and florists, bakers, and photographers are unfairly discriminating if they choose not to provide their services for same-sex weddings. Private employers and even religious institutions are guilty of discrimination against women's "reproductive health choices" if the health insurance they offer employees does not include coverage for contraception and abortion-inducing drugs. Yet the tax policy the president has urged Congress to write into law would further discriminate against the minority of women who choose the traditional role of "stay-at-home mom," devoting their time and energy to the unpaid labor of raising children, buying the groceries and doing the myriad other tasks involved in managing a household.



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Obama has called for a "second-earner tax credit" for two-income couples worth five percent of the lower-paid spouse's first \$10,000 of earnings for a tax break of \$500. The credit, wrote Matt Gardner of the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy "would be unavailable to those couples earning over \$210,000." Why a couple earning \$210,000 a year needs a \$500 tax break is anyone's guess, but it is part of Obama's plan for "middle-class tax relief." He has also called on Congress to pass an expansion of the Child and Dependents Care tax credit, currently a 50-percent tax credit for a parent's first \$2,000 in babysitting or daycare expenditures that allow a spouse to work or look for work. Obama would increase that to \$6,000 in child-care expenses for most families, while increasing also the size of the credit families earning \$100,000 or more can claim.

The rub is that these proposals perpetuate a policy bias in favor of encouraging women to forsake the opportunity to be at home with their small children in exchange for the family's second paycheck. For many, if not most, families, that may be an economic necessity in an economy where wages don't keep



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pace with inflation and real income for most Americans has been declining for decades. But there are families, including those of modest means, that choose to forego the added income so that one parent, usually the mother, can stay home to take care of the children. And Obama's tax credits are not for them. As *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat put it, "You want pro-family tax reform? Sure, so long as the tax credit only pays for daycare and excludes families with a stay-at-home parent."

The feminist movement in the 1960s and '70s encouraged a disparaging view of the American "housewife," as women entered the labor market in force. The federal government encouraged the movement with Affirmative Action hiring "guidelines" (none dare call them quotas), not only out of concern for equal opportunity, but also because an expanding labor pool was considered good for business, while at the same time providing more workers to support Washington's ever-expanding, ever more costly welfare/warfare state. But the trend has drawbacks as well as advantages, both for the working families and for the social order. As Tim Carney wrote in the *Washington Examiner*:

Working parents acquire new job skills and keep their existing skills fresh. That definitely has value for the family and even the broader economy. Stay-at-home moms have the opportunity to provide their kids with more positive attention than they can get in most daycare situations. This has positive effects on children. Having a wife at home can also make husbands and fathers more productive in the workplace. How should we weigh these pros and cons of dual-income families versus single-income families with one spouse staying home? Here's the great thing about America: We don't have to decide which is better for everyone — we just have to decide for our own families. The tax code should be neutral on this choice. Obama wants the tax code to take sides, tilting the scales towards working over staying at home. This is social engineering by Obama.

The irony is that it is cultural conservatives who are most often accused of trying to "impose their values" on the body politic. Yet social engineering is the essence of the progressive agenda. As Selwyn Duke pointed out at TheNewAmerican.com, the president who is zealously "pro-choice" when defending a woman's "right" to destroy her unborn child does not want to leave much else to private choice. In a speech at Rhode Island College last fall, Obama spoke of the difficulties parents often face in trying to find affordable, quality day care.

"And sometimes, someone, usually mom, leaves the workplace to stay home with the kids, which then leaves her earning a lower wage for the rest of her life as a result. And that's not a choice we want Americans to make," the president said.

Surely it is nothing new to find politicians using tax credits, subsidies, or loans to encourage individuals or businesses to buy electric cars, build windmills or solar panels, or do any number of things that social planners deem beneficial. Indeed, the entire ObamaCare scheme, with its subsidies for people purchasing health insurance and penalties for those who don't, is social engineering on a grand scale. Pamela Olson, former assistant secretary for the treasury for tax policy has observed that the tax code incorporates "policies aimed at the environment, conservation, green energy, manufacturing, innovation, education, saving, retirement, healthcare, child care, welfare, corporate governance, export promotion, charitable giving, governance of tax exempt organizations and economic development, to name but a few."

That's quite a "few." And most, if not all, of the above-mentioned tax incentives has enjoyed broad bipartisan support. As a result, there is scarcely any aspect of life in which Americans are not bribed, cajoled, or "incentivized" by their government to spend their time, energy, and money in ways the government favors, with rewards and penalties filling a tax code that runs some 70,000 pages. At a time



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when the president and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are once again promising to reform and simplify the tax code, adding a tax credit to encourage the separation of young children from both parents through most of their waking hours would be another step in the wrong direction.



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