



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on November 5, 2009

Obama Bribes States With Education Grants

President Barack Obama on November 4 waved \$5 billion of federal grant money under the noses of state education officials to entice them to implement his ideas for reforming public schools.

The \$5-billion grant fund has been titled "Race to the Top," and the money is part of Obama's \$787-billion economic stimulus package. States must compete for the money, which Education Secretary Arne Duncan will dispense at Obama's pleasure with no Congressional control. Only 10 to 20 states are expected to actually receive some of the grant money.



Obama promoted the competitive grants while visiting a Wisconsin middle school. He was trying to influence a November 5 vote by state legislators about linking teacher performance ratings to student test scores. This effectively links a teacher's pay to how well his students perform, based on what's being tested. Wisconsin lawmakers are expected to lift a ban on establishing this connection, presumably so the state can qualify for some of Obama's grant money.

The Obama administration has said that refusing to link teacher performance ratings to student test scores would lessen a state's chance of receiving federal funds. In Wisconsin, Obama wrapped the bribe he is offering in high-sounding language about the importance of education.

"There is nothing that will determine the quality of our future as a nation or the lives our children more than the kind of education we provide them," Obama declared. "If you're willing to hold yourselves more accountable, if you develop a strong plan to improve the quality of education in your state, we'll offer you a grant to help make that plan a reality."

What the president really meant was, "If you will make your states more accountable to the federal government in the area of education, ol' Uncle Sam will make it worth your while." Tying teacher ratings and pay to student test scores will provide a strong incentive for teachers to prepare students to do well on standardized tests.

But standardized tests are not always as effective at measuring student knowledge as an essay test or other form of evaluation. Also, teachers of disabled, troubled, or remedial students cannot be fairly judged by the performance of their charges on standard tests. Not only that, if the federal government has any say about what is in the tests, teachers will be forced to focus on imparting what Washington wants students to know.

This kind of bribery is an unconstitutional exercise of executive branch power over the states. The Congress is supposed to have the purse strings of the federal government, not the President or his staff members. There is no authorization in the Constitution for the federal government either to take taxpayer money, to borrow money, or to simply print money and use it to bribe states into compliance with the President's wishes.



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The Associated Press admitted this when [they wrote](#) on November 4: “The administration can’t really tell states and schools what to do, since education has been largely a state and local responsibility throughout the history of the U.S. But the grants give Obama considerable leverage.”



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