



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on October 28, 2010

## Poison Ivy at Ivy League

ABC News/Money reported on Oct. 27 that the U.S. annually spends millions to send government workers to Harvard's JFK School of Government for a month of training. At \$18,000 per employee. Training for what? you might ask.

This spring, Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) asked what the Harvard Senior Executive Fellows program is, and why it costs so much. ABC reported the answer, "Government and school officials say that's what it costs to train executives." Harvard did note, though, that it offers daily classes ranging from \$500 to \$1000.



Just when you thought they were able to produce "waste, fraud, and abuse" (WFA is the sacred war cry of countless campaigns) without any special training, now we learn that the government spends about \$5 million a year, according to Harvard's figures, on training programs. Every year.

ABC continued, "Enrollment in Harvard's government training programs increased from 376 to 490 between 2007 and 2009, a rise of about 30 percent, according to figures the school provided Congress."

A visit to the [Harvard Kennedy School](#) website about the Senior Executive Fellows (SEF) course reveals that it's designed for federal government employees at the GS-14/GS-15 levels and their military counterparts. Who says crime doesn't pay?

More details from a [course brochure](#) claim "It is intended to help meet the government's need for a highly trained and motivated corps of executives to effectively implement Government policies and programs." It is argued among some that the Constitution already does that, sans the Harvard training.

The brochure continues, "The program has increasingly attracted officials from a number of other countries." Nothing like having your enemies know your playbook.

Economic meltdown aside, the U.S. housing market debacle, astronomical debt, and the imbroglio of two expensive wars cause such training expenditures to appear extravagant. But should they ever be authorized?

It gets worse. ABC wrote, "But the Obama administration acknowledges that nobody's in charge of figuring out whether the government is getting the best deal possible, or even whether the training is worth the money." The school's dean, David Ellwood, rallied with this statement to Grassley: "It is hard to imagine a time when we more badly need wise and effective public servants who are well-equipped to respond to these large and rapidly changing challenges."

The SEF brochure and website repeatedly emphasized increasing executives' skills and perspectives on their roles and opportunities as public managers. It is most troubling that government officials, and some Americans, see the roles as ones of "management" to begin with. Government workers are servants of the people, not their overseers.



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Next week, Americans have one more opportunity to replace the WFA crowd with some constitutional candidates who will hopefully start to "ride herd" on the spendthrifts.

That doesn't take any special training.



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