

# WebMemo



Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 2389  
April 9, 2009

## The Dirty Dozen: 12 New Policies That Undermine Civil Society

*Jennifer A. Marshall and Katherine Bradley*

Within the first quarter of 2009, the Obama Administration and the 111th Congress have advanced a number of policies that will undermine family and religious freedom in America. Together they show a serious disregard for parental rights, human dignity, freedom of conscience, and civil society in American life.

In these difficult economic times, policymakers should recognize and empower the vast resources of family, religious institutions, and civil society. Instead, Congress and the Administration have systematically promoted policies that debilitate the protective and problem-solving capacity of these fundamental institutions.

### **Undermining Family, Faith, and Freedom**

1. *Discouraging Charitable Giving.* Even as charities struggle to make ends meet during the economic recession, the President's budget would reduce the amount higher earners can deduct from their income taxes for their charitable giving.

Faith-based ministries and other non-profits serving the public good are dependent on the generosity of others through charitable giving. Individuals targeted by this proposed policy are some of the most significant supporters of these charitable causes. The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University estimates that households with the highest incomes will reduce their giving annually by 4.8 percent, or \$3.87 billion, in response to this policy change.

2. *Blocking Educational Opportunity for Low-Income D.C. Students.* Due to a devastating pol-

icy included in the omnibus bill, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program is in danger of ending after the 2009–2010 school year. Since 2004, this program has provided approximately 3,700 scholarships worth \$7,500 each for low-income children to attend safe and effective private schools of their choice. Evaluations show that parents are very pleased and test scores are moving in the right direction, with students regaining lost ground.<sup>1</sup>

President Obama has made a smart choice in sending his daughters to private school rather than the D.C. public schools. Low-income parents should have the same opportunity to choose safe and effective schools for their children.

3. *Reducing Abstinence Education.* The omnibus bill reduces spending on the Community Based Abstinence Education program by \$13 million while increasing family planning funding by \$7.5 million.<sup>2</sup>

A Heritage Foundation report indicates that the government spends \$12 to promote contraception and safe-sex education for every dollar spent to encourage abstinence.<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows that abstinent teens report better psychological well-

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/Research/Family/wm2389.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/wm2389.cfm)

Produced by the Richard and Helen DeVos  
Center for Religion and Civil Society

Published by The Heritage Foundation  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4999  
(202) 546-4400 • [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting  
the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to  
aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

being and higher academic achievement while avoiding risky behaviors.<sup>4</sup> Further, a 2004 Zogby poll revealed that 96 percent of parents want teens to be taught that abstinence is the best option.<sup>5</sup>

4. *Rolling Back Conscience Protections for Health Care Professionals.* The Obama Administration has announced plans to eliminate a regulation that protects the conscience rights of doctors and other health professionals who object to participating in controversial procedures such as abortion or sterilization. 87 percent of respondents to a March 2009 poll believe it is important to “make sure that health care professionals are not forced to participate in procedures and practices to which they have moral objections.”<sup>6</sup>
5. *Subsidizing Planned Parenthood.* The omnibus bill includes a provision that increases the profits of Planned Parenthood and manufacturers of contraceptives.

Under Medicaid, drug companies are required to pay rebates to the Medicaid program. Certain sales offered at discounts can be excluded from the calculation of the “best price,” reducing the rebate owed to Medicaid. The omnibus bill expands the exclusion to cover discounted sales of contraceptives through additional family planning clinics. The result is that drug companies can sell contraceptives at deeply discounted prices, and these lower prices increase profits for the clinics that resell them.

Ironically, while forfeiting higher rebates from the sale of these contraceptives, the President’s budget proposes to increase other drug rebates.

6. *Restricting Parental Notification and Expanding Family Planning.* The President’s budget seeks to expand family planning services through Medicaid.

Initially proposed as part of the stimulus bill, this provision was eliminated after attracting negative attention. Now back as a part of the budget, the proposal would likely allow states to disregard the income of an applicant or recipient for family planning under Medicaid. This would allow a child—no matter what his or her family’s income level—to be eligible for free family planning services without parental notification.

In addition, the proposal would supersede current law and would likely not allow states to provide coverage without including family planning services.

7. *Using Tax Dollars to Finance Abortion Abroad.* On January 23, the President overturned a policy that prohibited the use of U.S. tax dollars for family planning organizations that provide abortions and abortion counseling overseas. 58 percent of Americans disapprove of this decision by the Obama Administration, according to a February 2009 USA Today/Gallup poll.<sup>7</sup>

U.S. taxpayers should not have to pay to export this controversial practice abroad, where it serves

1. U.S. Department of Education, “Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After Three Years,” March 2009, at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20094050/pdf/20094051.pdf> (April 7, 2009).
2. The Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009, Public Law 111-8, page 411, at [http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/2009\\_Con\\_Statement\\_DivE.pdf](http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/2009_Con_Statement_DivE.pdf) (April 2, 2009).
3. Melissa G. Pardue, Robert E. Rector, and Shannan Martin, “Government Spends \$12 on Safe Sex and Contraceptives for Every \$1 Spent on Abstinence,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1718, January 14, 2004, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Abstinence/bg1718.cfm>.
4. Christine C. Kim and Robert E. Rector, “Abstinence Education: Assessing the Evidence,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2126, April 22, 2008, at [www.heritage.org/Research/Abstinence/bg2126.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Abstinence/bg2126.cfm).
5. Robert E. Rector, Melissa G. Pardue, and Shannan Martin, “What Do Parents Want Taught in Sex Education Programs,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1722, January 28, 2004, at [www.heritage.org/Research/Abstinence/bg1722.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Abstinence/bg1722.cfm).
6. Kellyanne Conway, “Key Findings on Conscience Rights Polling,” letter to interested parties regarding the polling company, inc./WomanTrend survey, April 8, 2009, at [http://www.freedom2care.org/docLib/20090407\\_090408SurveyPressPacket.pdf](http://www.freedom2care.org/docLib/20090407_090408SurveyPressPacket.pdf) (April 9, 2009).
7. Jeffrey M. Jones, “Americans Approve of Most Obama Actions to Date,” Gallup, February 2, 2009, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/114091/Americans-Approve-Obama-Actions-Date.aspx?version=print> (April 2, 2009).

as poor public diplomacy for the nation's commitment to life and liberty.

8. *Taxpayer Funding for Controversial, Unproven Embryonic Stem Cell Research.* President Obama issued an executive order authorizing federal funding for human embryonic stem cell research. It also repeals a 2007 executive order that encouraged the National Institutes of Health to explore alternatives to embryonic stem cell research that do not involve destroying a human embryo.

While advocates of embryonic stem cell research discuss the potential cures, many medical advances have already been achieved by ethically sound, alternative stem cell research.<sup>8</sup>

9. *Violating Religious Groups' Equal Access on College Campuses.* The stimulus package offers funds for the renovation of colleges and universities. These funds are prohibited, however, from use in the renovation of facilities used for gatherings like religious worship or sectarian instruction. This provision can be interpreted broadly enough to keep groups such as the Catholic Students Association or the Fellowship of Christian Athletes from meeting in buildings renovated with these funds.

10. *Rolling Back Successful Welfare Reform.* The stimulus package undermines the fiscal incentive structure that drove national welfare reform.

The 1996 reform rewarded states for decreasing their caseloads and putting people into jobs. As a result, the number of welfare caseloads shrunk by more than 60 percent, and child poverty fell by 1.6 million. The stimulus bill moves in the opposite direction, creating a new \$5 billion cash welfare program that pays states when their caseloads rise. This new program gives states an incentive to grow their rolls, decreasing their motivation to move people into jobs and self-sufficiency.

11. *Expanding Dependence on Government.* The stimulus package combined with the omnibus bill and the President's budget represents a massive expansion of overall welfare spending. The stimulus bill alone will add nearly \$800 billion in new spending over the next 10 years on programs like food stamps, government housing, and Medicaid.<sup>9</sup> Significant changes to Medicaid and SCHIP—programs intended for low-income Americans—have extended eligibility to families well into the middle class, costing taxpayers an extra \$25 billion over 10 years.

12. *Leaving a Legacy of Debt to Future Generations.* Since its start in January, the 111th Congress has already spent more than \$2 trillion in response to the recession, and that figure could go much higher, incurring an enormous debt that will have to be paid by future generations. The stimulus package alone represents an added debt burden of \$9,400 per household in America.<sup>10</sup>

**Weakening America.** These 12 policies represent a troubling new direction in social policy. They will leave Americans less equipped to provide for themselves and their neighbors in the midst of trying times.

Policymakers can ensure America's social welfare, economic stability, and capacity to lead in the world by pursuing policies that encourage stable family formation; show respect for parental rights, conscience, and the role of religious institutions; and create positive incentives for work, thrift, and private initiative. In the first quarter of 2009, the Administration and Congress have pursued policies that move in the opposite direction.

—Jennifer A. Marshall is Director of and Katherine Bradley is Research Fellow in the Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society at The Heritage Foundation.

- 
8. David Prentice, William L. Saunders, Jan Ledochowski, and Lukas Lucenic, "Adult Stem Cell Success Stories—2008 Update: July–December," Family Research Council, January 12, 2009, at <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF09A32.pdf> (April 2, 2009).
  9. Robert Rector and Katherine Bradley, "Stimulus Bill Abolishes Welfare Reform and Adds New Welfare Spending," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2287, February 11, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/wm2287.cfm>.
  10. Brian M. Riedl, "Obama Budget Would Double the National Debt," Heritage Foundation *Commentary*, March 24, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/press/commentary/ed032409e.cfm>. This total was calculated by dividing the stimulus bill's cost (\$787 billion, plus approximately \$324 billion in net interest costs) by the estimated 118 million U.S. households.