

A Binder Full of Bad Ideas

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Earlier this year at a roundtable discussion in Colorado, Mitt Romney was talking about education—extolling the virtues of private schools and vouchers, and criticizing public schools and teachers unions. When a teacher participating in the discussion tried to offer her perspective, Romney shot back: “I didn’t ask you a question.”

But teachers, like many other Americans, have questions about Romney’s policies and proposals. They worry about their impact on the education that kids receive, because he advocates slashing education funding and privatizing public education. They question his taking credit for educational success in Massachusetts that was spurred by reforms instituted a decade before he became governor, and wonder why as a presidential candidate he is proposing entirely different, discredited education policies. They are incredulous that he says he would preserve the U.S. Department of Education only so he’d have a club to go after teachers unions, when most teachers in Massachusetts and other high-performing states are unionized. They doubt his pledges to middle-income voters because, according to numerous independent analyses, the math doesn’t add up for his tax and job creation proposals.

This presidential election presents a choice between starkly different visions for the future of our country. Americans will choose between the candidate of a party that has obstructed, denied and even rooted against economic recovery during the Obama administration, and a president who pulled the country back from the brink of economic depression. One candidate has steadfastly fought to strengthen the middle class and ensure there is a safety net for those in need. The other has shown disdain for 47 percent of our population—a group that includes veterans, students, the working poor and people who receive Social Security benefits after a lifetime of work.

And it is a choice between a president who has shown constancy in his values and goals, and a man engaged in the perpetual repack-

aging of his candidacy. The prediction by a Romney campaign strategist that the candidate would reset like an “Etch A Sketch” has proved all too accurate; indeed, the man who described himself as a “severe conservative” while seeking the Republican nomination underwent an extreme makeover that was complete by the first presidential debate. But all this mishegas can’t hide the fact that Mitt Romney’s policies would move the country in the wrong direction.

Romney’s economic proposals are neither fair nor sound. His tax plan would give millionaires an average annual tax cut of \$187,000—paid for by raising taxes on middle-class families by \$2,000. And his job creation plan has been roundly discredited. (The Washington Post’s Fact Checker gave the plan four dreaded

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Pinocchios, ignominiously awarded only to “whoppers.”)

Romney’s education proposals are a combination of cuts (of up to 40 percent of federal education spending) and discredited privatization schemes (such as publicly financed

vouchers for students to attend private or religious schools). He has opposed efforts to invest in teachers and lower class sizes. He supports a budget plan that would take away Pell Grants from 1 million college students over the next 10 years, and advises students who can’t afford college to borrow more money from their parents.

These policies would hurt kids, communities and economic growth, and they reflect a cavalier dismissiveness toward the opportunities that help Americans build better lives. The president of the United States should promote opportunity for all, not just some, Americans.

A president for all enacts policies that help people trying to get back on their feet after the devastation wrought by reckless economic strategies. A president for all supports public schools so they can provide a great education to all children, no matter their circumstances or where they live, not an opt-out approach to education that weakens public schools in favor of ineffective privatization programs. A president for all fights to extend access to affordable healthcare to all people, including those with pre-existing conditions. A president for all rejects discriminatory economic policies that seek to lock in advantages that benefit elites and lock out those who seek a fair shot at a better life.

As Election Day approaches, we hope Americans will choose a president for all—a president for broadly shared prosperity, for stronger communities, for educational opportunity and for a bright future for all who call America home.



Weingarten at a Cleveland Teachers Union phone bank.

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