



Written by [Ann Shibley](#) on April 1, 2009

Stimulus Money Going Out to Schools

The [president would like to see public school teachers' jobs retained](#), having earmarked nearly all of the money for that purpose alone. And woe to those who don't use it as dictated. Acting like the Grand Poobah of public (read: government) education, Duncan has threatened that if the money is not used as directed, he will "come down like a ton of bricks" on those who defy the administration's plans. Anyone attempting to do so will be denied a chance at funds in the second round of stimulus money grabbing, says Duncan, despite the fact that Congress has allowed states and school districts to use the money for things other than avoiding teacher layoffs.



In fact, in the stimulus bill passed by Congress, \$39.5 billion was to be allotted for "backfilling" of state budget cuts and facilities modernization, with an additional \$8.8 billion for governors to award for "high priority" educational needs.

The present regime in Washington wants to do more than just save teachers' jobs, though. It views the stimulus money as an excellent way in which to enlarge the scope of the federal government's influence and control in various school programs, much as the administration is already doing to nationalize the financial and automotive sectors. "This is a historic opportunity, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, to lay the groundwork for a generation of education reforms," Duncan said.

In order to receive money, states have to actually apply for it, and must show improvement in things like teacher quality and academic standards through testing. However, the meeting of this [criteria seems to be missing in the case Duncan's home state of Illinois](#), which is [among the first to begin receiving the \\$3 billion](#) promised to it, out of the \$44 billion.

South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford is refusing to accept part of stimulus money designated for his state because the Obama administration won't let him use it to pay down debt. The administration has not yet figured out a way to force the states to take the money, and Sanford has no intentions of expanding the role of the federal government in the educational system or its price tag and then be left holding the bag when the money runs out.

There's an additional \$5 billion fund that states can compete to get their hands on, also through an application process.

But mostly there is confusion as to just exactly how the system is supposed to work, who gets the money, who gives it to whom and for what, and who has the authority to really decide how it is to be spent.

Take a look at the [mess in Ohio](#). The schools in one county there say that they realized after looking over the state budget that they won't see any of the promised money because it will go into the general



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revenue fund where there is less accountability and more opportunity for it to be plundered and spent elsewhere.

But what can be expected when the money is plundered from the taxpayers in the first place, and redistributed by personal design of the president?

Photo of Arne Duncan: AP Images



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