



The Daily Dish

The Progressive Mindset on Display

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | MARCH 2, 2023

Yesterday was an impressive display of the arrogance-superiority-condescension complex that underlies progressive economic policies. First, the world caught up with the reality of the CHIPS and Science Act signed into law by President Biden. Whereas previously it had been advertised as a wholesome tactic in the strategic competition with China, even *The New York Times* came to realize that this was another attempt to remake America in progressives' image: "If semiconductor manufacturers want a piece of the nearly \$40 billion in aid that Mr. Biden's administration began the process of handing out on Tuesday, they will need to provide child care for employees, run their plants on low-emission sources of energy, pay union wages for construction workers, shun stock buybacks and potentially share certain profits with the government." It's actually worse than that, but rent-seeking semiconductor firms deserve what they get if they take the money.

If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas.

Of course, there is also the amusing observation that Biden's progressives think they can re-engineer a \$26.1-trillion economy with \$40 billion in aid, but arithmetic has never been progressives' strong suit.

Second was the announcement that House progressives were planning to introduce a bill lowering the work week to four days. A similar bill was introduced in the previous Congress and it makes clear that the mechanism for doing so is to "reduce the standard workweek from 40 hours to 32 hours by lowering the maximum hours threshold for overtime compensation for non-exempt employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)."

So, for every employer whose workers are on a 40-hour (five-day) work week, every employee would instantaneously be 10 percent more expensive. You gotta hand it to progressives – they have impeccable timing. When the economy is starved for workers, reduce work. Bonus, when the economy is beset with inflation, add some cost-push inflation impetus.

Of course, because progressives are smarter and more moral than the rest of us, "A shorter workweek would benefit both employers and employees alike. Pilot programs run by governments and businesses across the globe have shown promising results as productivity climbed and workers reported better work-life balance, less need to take sick days, heightened morale, and lower childcare expenses because they had more time with their family and children. Shorter workweeks have also been shown to further reduce healthcare premiums for employers, lower operational costs for businesses, and have a positive environmental impact in some of these studies." And with a shorter work week, we will all shed those unwanted pounds!

This raises some questions. Since the shorter week would both raise productivity and lower operational costs, it would in turn raise profits. It is standard progressive fare that profit-seeking (read: evil) firms will do *anything* to make money. So, why haven't firms already done this? And if it is so darn wonderful for workers, why hasn't the four-day work week been the central plank of all labor negotiations? The reason is that this nirvana exists only in the neocortex and thalamus of progressive brains. In the real world, there are many different preferred

work schedules, many components to company decision-making, and many negotiating priorities. But progressives never trust people to make good decisions for their own lives.

Oh, and those pilot programs? You can take a look at one [here](#), but the key is that they are populated by a handful of firms and a small fraction of workers – both of whom are interested in a shorter work week. It is not representative of what happens by mandate when the FLSA is amended for everyone. And it proves the larger point: When something is in the mutual interest of employers and workers, the government should just stay far, far away.

That kind of economic freedom has been central to American success. Trusting Americans to decide for themselves has been as well.