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# Gov't Knows Best? White House creates 'nudge squad' to shape behavior

## Huntsman Post

### Gov't Knows Best? White House creates 'nudge squad' to shape behavior

*Editor's note: [This FoxNews.com story](#) quotes Michael Thomas, a clinical assistant professor at the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, about governmental "nudge policies," which are strategic approaches aimed at subtly influencing behavior. This has also sparked stories in [The Washington Times](#), [Mail Online](#), [the examiner.com](#) and in [The Blaze](#) where Dr. Thomas is also quoted.*

July 30, 2013 FoxNews.com

By Maxim Lott

The federal government is hiring what it calls a "Behavioral Insights Team" that will look for ways to subtly influence people's behavior, according to a document describing the program obtained by FoxNews.com. Critics warn there could be unintended consequences to such policies, while supporters say the team could make government and society more efficient.

While the program is still in its early stages, the document shows the White House is already working on such projects with almost a dozen federal departments and agencies including the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture. '

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But some economists urge caution.'

"I am very skeptical of a team promoting nudge policies," Michael Thomas, an economist at Utah State University, told FoxNews.com.

"Ultimately, nudging ... assumes a small group of people in government know better about choices than the individuals making them." And sometimes, he added, government actually promotes the wrong thing.

"Trans-fats were considered better than saturated and unsaturated fats in the past. Now we know this is an error."

[To read the full story, click here.](#)