



Home Rule

by Grover G. Norquist

While home schooling in the sixties and seventies was largely a liberal phenomenon—parents who wanted their children out of the conformist, bourgeois public schools—the growth in home schooling since the late seventies has been among religious conservatives, evangelicals, and Roman Catholics. Mike Farris, who ran for lieutenant governor of Virginia last year, has been working with home-schoolers for eleven years. Now the president of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), Farris believes the present trend will continue over the next four years, and that home-schoolers, who today comprise 2 percent of all school age children in the U.S., will eventually reach 5 percent—leveling off there, since home-schooling requires that a family support itself with one wage-earner. Farris estimates that there are between 700,000 and a million children currently being schooled at home by 250,000 to 300,000 families.

Farris's group has 38,000 members who pay \$100 in dues each year. His newsletter is published six times a year, and his emergency fax system goes out to 140 groups that in turn connect with 3,000-4,000 city support groups, who contact the individual families. The groups have close links to parents who send their children to private schools as well. Twelve percent of children are in private schools, a number that continues to grow, due to the founding of two to three new evangelical schools every day.

In secular Washington, their affiliation with born-again Christianity has led allies and adversaries alike to underestimate the home-schoolers' political sophistication. But the most powerful

union in the country recently tried to pull a fast one on them and got burned.

On February 14, Dean Clancy, the education staffer for Rep. Dick Armey (R-Tex.), called the National Center for Home Education (NCHE) to ask if an amendment offered by Rep. George Miller (D-Cal.) might be interpreted to require certification for parents who teach their children at home. Within an hour, they got their answer: it most certainly could. No states now require such licensing, although the unrelentingly left-wing National Education Association—with annual dues of more than \$165 million—has long fought for it.

Unionized teachers outnumber home-schooling parents by a factor of five. But ten days later, the home-schoolers won an overwhelming victory. Congress voted 374 to 53 to pass an Armey amendment that not only exempts home-schoolers from teacher certification, but goes on to exempt home-schoolers and all private schools from the entire thousand-page H.R. 6 (the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). It further protects home-schoolers by rewriting the federal definition of a school to exclude them. Home-schoolers waged a grassroots campaign of phone calls, faxes, and personal visits to Congress that defeated the most powerful lobby in the U.S. in a week and a half. *Roll Call* reported that more than 800,000 calls rained in on members—more than they received over gays in the military, the Clinton tax increase, and NAFTA combined. While it got scant coverage in the mainstream press, this was a battle that will be studied by conservative activists—in and out of Congress. What follows is a blow-by-blow account of the showdown:

Monday, February 14: Within an hour of discovering the threat to home schooling, Dick Armey offers an amendment in committee to exempt home-schoolers and private schools from the teacher-certification requirement. George Miller leads the entire Democratic side of the committee in voting down the Armey language. Miller's vote makes clear in retrospect that the *intent* of the school bill has from the beginning been to regulate home-schoolers.

Farris hires several local printers to print 38,000 copies of a letter outlining home-schoolers' fears, which are out the door to all HSLDA members within 56 hours. Copies are delivered to Congress and a "national fax alert" begins.

Wednesday, February 16. Farris tapes an interview with Pat Robertson's "700 Club." An hour later, he gives a two-hour interview to Marlin Maddoux, host of "Point of View," a syndicated radio show that reaches four million listeners. By four that afternoon, congressional staffers begin calling HSLDA, promising that their bosses will vote for a "Home School/Private School Freedom Amendment" and asking for an end to the calls from their districts.

Thursday, February 17. The wave of calls into Washington builds. By noon, Miller's office has stopped answering calls and turned on its answering machine. At one, Farris tapes an interview with James Dobson whose radio show will reach 1,500 stations on Monday, February 21. One Democratic congressman's chief of staff tells home-schooling leader Doug Phillips he has already received 600 calls today, and begs Phillips to ask for the calls to stop.

Within forty-eight hours of the fax alert, more than a thousand Christian radio stations have covered the story. Within 72 hours, a majority of evangeli-

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cal churches have been alerted.

Friday, February 18. Arney announces that he will lead the fight for the Home School/Private School Freedom Amendment which has the support of seventy congressmen by nightfall. Two problems arise: anti-home-school congressional offices misinform callers, telling them that their concerns have been taken care of. The waters are further muddied by the efforts of a fringe coalition of small moderate and liberal home-schoolers to negotiate compromise language—independent of Farris and Arney. Another leadership fax goes out to make it clear that Miller's language remains unacceptable.

Over the weekend, many members are met by home-schoolers in their districts. Most importantly, Speaker Tom Foley is confronted by dozens of home-schoolers and promises to support the Arney amendment.

Monday, February 21. Miller sends out a "Dear Colleague" letter blaming "the far right" for the telephone blitz. The letter's petulant tone and personal attacks elicit a letter from Arney protesting that Miller's conduct violates House rules on collegiality.

Two Christian school associations, the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS), join the home-schoolers' fight, and send out mailings and fax alerts. Arney's language is updated and a national fax alert goes out to home-schoolers with the most recent language.

Rush Limbaugh discusses the home-school telephone blitz of Congress. (But, contrary to the later complaints of Democrats—oblivious to the size of both the home-schooling forces and Christian radio and TV broadcasting—Limbaugh was not the source of it.)

At 10 p.m., a thousand people gather in Dallas at a home-school rally.

Tuesday, February 22. The phone blitz continues. A number of congressmen instruct staff to stop answering all calls.

Pennsylvania Rep. Bill Goodling, the ranking Republican on the Education and Labor Committee, undermines Arney's efforts by publicly denying that Miller's amendment threatens home schools.

Wednesday, February 23. The phone calls continue. Home-schoolers arrive on Capitol Hill from Georgia, Missouri, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, as an ice storm hits Washington.

ACSI reports it has contacted its 3,000 schools. Mike Farris spends an hour on Pat Buchanan's radio show.

While many parochial schools and home-schooling Catholics join the fight, the U.S. Catholic Conference, which has refused to join the fight against teacher certification, complains that Arney's amendment might endanger their members who receive federal funds.

Thursday, February 24. Dick Arney sends out a "Dear Colleague" letter explaining that a compromise amendment by Education and Labor Committee Chairman William Ford will not protect home-schoolers.

At 9 a.m., Democrats on the Rules Committee introduce a wrong version of the Arney amendment for the day's votes. Dale Kildee (D-Mich.) solicits and then sends out a letter from the Catholic Conference attacking Arney. Arney wants to change the language of his amendment to allay the Catholic Conference, but the Rules committee chairman, Joe Moakley of Massachusetts, is the only person who can allow this last-minute, on-the-floor maneuver. Home-schoolers in Massachusetts call Moakley; within an hour, Moakley's staff announces that Moakley will support Arney's change.

At 1:54 p.m., the Ford compromise amendment passes with 424 votes. Only Miller votes no. Home-schoolers see the compromise as a fig leaf. At 1:57, Arney asks for—and receives—Unanimous Consent of the House to modify his amendment. A single congressman could stop Arney from presenting the amendment he wants. None does.

At 2 p.m., debate begins on the final language of Arney's Home School/Private School Freedom Amendment.

At 3:38 p.m., the Arney amendment passes, 374 to 53.

Arney gives credit to the home-schoolers for being prepared. "They knew the Clinton administration would make a move against home-schoolers on behalf of the NEA. They didn't know when, but they were ready." Farris adds that home-schooling is the central organizing principle of the lives of hundreds of thousands of parents. They were defending their homes and their children. "They are exhibiting enormous personal responsibility in their families and they want enormous personal freedom." And while their strong reaction might

have surprised congressional members, Farris notes that home-schoolers are battle-tested veterans of fifty fights at the state level over the last ten years.

Other members of Congress who watched the precision drill of Dick Arney in the House and Mike Farris and the home-schoolers on the outside attribute the home-schoolers' success to several factors:

(1) They picked the right champion. Arney was willing to fight it out. He refused to compromise, knowing that almost every member of Congress from the speaker on down had promised home-schoolers in their districts that they would vote for his amendment and that compromises like the Ford amendment would not suffice.

(2) They went for total victory, not simply protecting themselves from attack, but rolling back the other threats to home-schoolers in the bill and also protecting private schools.

(3) They did not fall for the Democrats' ploy of "Get them to stop calling and then I'll vote for you" (as in
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1994) should ring in the ears of conservatives like a fireball in the night rather than any cause for celebration. Mr. Cranston has made it clear the liberals have a moral vision, in all its simplicity, where the state as the moral agent distributes fairness to its citizens.

Conservatives must create a moral vision based on personal responsibility but avoiding the nightmares of modern individualism, or else, the Clintons will push us off a cliff while we whimper, "But, Bill, we're the good guys."

—Thomas Simcox
Cresskill, New Jersey

Crying Wolfpack

I had trouble believing that it was, indeed, *The American Spectator* in which I read the Brock Yates review of Peter Golenbock's book on stock-car racing (*American Zoom*, TAS, February 1994). Yates criticized NASCAR for turning a rural pastime into a successful business, and criticized Golenbock for missing this "greed" aspect of the story. His criticism was out of line each time.

As to the first, NASCAR should be applauded and emulated for the tremendous success and growth it has experienced in the face of government attacks on the tobacco industry that supports it. Commercialism of the sport is a natural reaction to market forces. Stock car racing is a dynamic sport that evolves and adapts to meet spectator demand (as opposed to a static, never-changing sport such as baseball). Yates's contention that commercialism came at the expense of racing's "characters" is false. If true, it surely would have resulted in decreased attendance rates.

Rather than criticize Golenbock for writing a shallow book, Yates should have explained *why* the book is as it is. The reason, as Golenbock made clear in interviews, is that he wanted to repay the citizens of North Carolina by writing something positive about the state's sports, after his earlier book (*Personal Fouls*) about the NC State basketball team caused such disruption. *Personal Fouls* was filled with criticism of Wolfpack coach Jim Valvano for his supposed "greed" in capitalizing on his success. (Yates must have appreciated that.) Golenbock's unfounded and irresponsible allegations directly caused the

destruction of NCSU basketball (which, of course, is the only sport that Carolinians revere as much as they do stock car racing). Some NCSU students still wear "Don't Be a Peter" T-shirts.

It was Golenbock's repentant side that ignored the issues of NASCAR money-making, apparently much to Yates' displeasure. Golenbock needn't have bothered. He has not been, and will not be, forgiven.

—Timothy R. Wyatt
Raleigh, North Carolina

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"Put down that gun, and we'll talk"). Their pressure was unrelenting.

(4) Within ten days, Farris had sent out five faxes to his network, and his message went out repeatedly to all Christian radio stations, so that home-schoolers knew, hour by hour, the exact state of play.

(5) Home-schoolers were sophisticated enough to know what procedural votes were important, and didn't allow Congress to fool voters with meaningless votes that are canceled out by procedural motions.

Home schoolers had the home court advantage. They were defending a freedom they already enjoy. Dick Armev notes that it is always easier to get people to fight to protect a liberty than to acquire new freedoms. These were, Armev observes, "real people who saw their personal liberty at risk." They understood that "if we don't act in the next few days we'll be out of the home-schooling business."

Conservative activist Paul Weyrich, now a media maven with his own National Empowerment Television channel, reminds us that the Christian Right was created not in 1962 in response to the elimination of prayer in public school, not in 1973 with the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, but in 1978 with President Carter's assaults on Christian radio and threats against the tax status of Christian private schools.

Stay tuned: Farris is now examining the Clinton health care plan for its impact on home-schoolers, in particular Hillary Clinton, Donna Shalala, and Joycelyn Elders's insistence on school-based clinics dispensing health care independent of parental notification or approval. □