

138-3

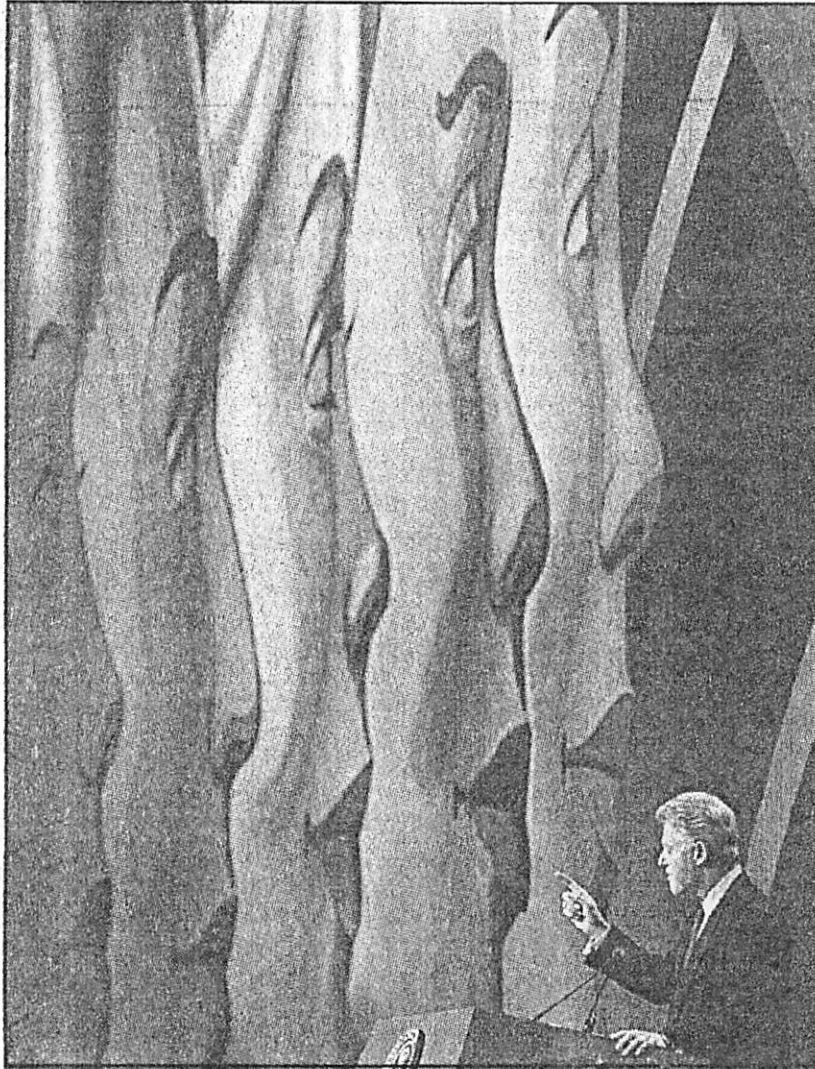


Photo by Ross D. Franklin/The Washington Times

The war on hooky: President Clinton unveils an anti-truancy plan in a speech to the National Education Association convention. Story, A3.

NEA may retreat on gay month

Union dissenters, conservatives agree

By Carol Innerst
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The National Education Association appears ready to sound retreat in a battle with Concerned Women for America and some of its own members who are dismayed by NEA support for celebrating Lesbian and Gay History Month in public schools.

Delegates to the NEA's 134th annual convention in Washington are being asked to modify a statement of support for a Lesbian and Gay History Month adopted by last year's Representative Assembly, which became a lightning rod for conservatives as well as for some NEA members.

"We heard from members who disagree with it," said Kathleen Lyons, spokeswoman for the 2.2-million-member union. "We have received more questions than complaints."

A vote on whether to kill, modify
see NEA, page A7

NEA

From page A1

or preserve the statement could come as early as today as delegates consider about 300 resolutions and new business items, but it's more likely the issue will be taken up tomorrow, she said.

Concerned Women for America (CWA) led a yearlong fight to get the NEA to reconsider its position.

The 600,000-member organization was behind petition drives and telephone calls to union headquarters protesting the policy, according to Marian Wallace, CWA director of research.

CWA took out newspaper ads this week appealing to NEA delegates to "let the NEA leadership know how you feel about their agenda — an agenda that too often has more to do with indoctrinating children than educating them."

"We advocate noting an African-American Month or a Women's Month, but we do not support celebrating a month of an unnatural lifestyle that is unhealthy for anybody, especially for youth," Mrs. Wallace said.

Reacting to the controversy that erupted shortly after the 1995 convention, the NEA's Resolutions Committee in February proposed rewriting and combining the concepts of three current resolutions that deal with racism, sexism and

discrimination by sexual orientation in education.

The rewrite would eliminate the statement adopted in 1995 that reads:

"The National Education Association recognizes the importance of raising the awareness and increasing the sensitivity of staff, students, parents and the community to sexual orientation in our society. The Association therefore supports the development of positive plans that lead to effective ongoing training programs for education employees for the purpose of identifying and eliminating sexual-orientation stereotyping in the educational setting. Such programs should attend to but not be limited to:

"a. Accurate portrayal of the roles and contributions of gay, lesbian and bisexual people throughout history, with acknowledgment of their sexual orientation;

"b. The acceptance of diverse sexual orientation and the awareness of sexual stereotyping whenever sexuality and/or tolerance of diversity is taught;

"c. Elimination of sexual orientation name-calling and jokes in the classroom;

"d. Support for the celebration of a Lesbian and Gay History Month as a means of acknowledging the contributions of lesbians, gays and bisexuals throughout history."

NEA vice president wins top post

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Bob Chase, vice president of the National Education Association since 1989, yesterday was elected NEA president in a vote of the 10,000 delegates attending the association's annual convention in Washington.

The NEA said 9,086 ballots were cast. Mr. Chase got 5,377, or 59.6 percent. He defeated Marilyn Monahan, a former president of the union's New Hampshire affiliate, who has one year left on her term as national secretary-treasurer.

Mr. Chase, a former Connecticut junior high school social studies teacher, immediately called on members to set the agenda for school renewal.

"What appeared to move the delegates was some folks talking from the floor about how they had been damaged as young people by a lack of tolerance from their families or schools," recalled Miss Lyons, the union spokeswoman.

The proposed revision, which can be amended from the floor, reads in part: "The National Education Association believes in the equality of all individuals. Discrimination and stereotyping

"If we don't lead, we will be led," Mr. Chase said. "To fail to do so would be to allow the enemies of public education to set the agenda. In order to fight the threats to public education, including vouchers and corporate takeovers, we must remain on the cutting edge of education reform."

Mr. Chase will succeed Keith Geiger, whose term expires Sept. 1 after seven years at the helm of the 2.2-million-member union.

Delegates also elected Reg Weaver, a junior high school science teacher from Illinois, vice president. Lily Eskelsen of Utah and Eddie Davis of North Carolina were elected to the executive committee.

based on such factors as race, gender, physical disabilities and sexual orientation must be eliminated."

It urges "plans, activities and programs" to "increase tolerance and sensitivity to individuals and groups in a diverse society composed of such groups as American Indians/Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Hispanics, women, gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities."