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In Nebraska, Pledge Remains 'Under God'

LINCOLN, NE — The eight-member Nebraska Board of Education passed a resolution on August 9 in support of the Pledge of Allegiance as currently written, including the words "under God." Former elementary school teacher and board member, Kathy Wilmot of Beaver City, introduced the resolution, which was unanimously approved by the board without discussion. (See excerpts from text of resolution, page 4.)



Kathy Wilmot

To preface her introduction, Mrs. Wilmot shared with board members a few comments from one of her constituents. "The American Flag is the symbol of the USA; loved by its bearers, respected by its friends, feared by its enemies," Wilmot quoted, "but this nation's strength does not lie in a piece of red, white and blue cloth. Rather, it lies in the common beliefs our flag represents, including the belief that we are 'one nation, under God.' If we fail to pass these beliefs on to future generations, neither our flag nor the nation she stands for will survive."

After the meeting, Mrs. Wilmot expressed satisfaction that the board acted so quickly and decisively to protect the rights of students and educators. "I'm



Firefighters were among America's bravest heroes in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

proud that our board is standing with Governor Mike Johanns and Attorney General Don Stenberg in reminding local boards and school districts that the Pledge of Allegiance as written is legal in Nebraska's schools. Students choosing not to participate have that right, but schools should ensure that students and faculty wishing to recite the pledge may continue to do so."

Mrs. Wilmot has been a member of the State Board of Education since 1994. In addition to her teaching credentials, she is professionally qualified to work with the mentally retarded, and is active in many civic organizations including Eagle Forum.

NEA Wants Schools to Blame America for 9/11 But teachers reject recommendations

The National Education Association's Health Information Network (NEA-HIN) website last month unveiled lesson plans for teachers to help students observe the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks that killed some 3,000 people. The main themes were "tolerance" and "diversity." Parents and teachers were exhorted not to "suggest any group is responsible," but instead to blame America. The NEA urged teachers to talk about "the internment of Japanese after Pearl Harbor" and the alleged "backlash against Arab Americans during the Gulf War."

Teachers nationwide disregarded the NEA's propaganda, telling the *Washington Times* (8-20-02) that they "will develop lesson plans based on students' questions and will focus on the facts to correct any misconceptions children may have about the terrorist attacks." Both educators and psychologists warned that the worst thing teachers could do is "sugarcoat" the truth.

A spokeswoman for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) told the *Times* that her union does not agree with the NEA's lesson plans and "does not support a blame-America approach in particular." The AFT, she said, "wishes to distance itself from the entire document."

Included with the material offered on the NEA-HIN website is a link to a list of

recommendations for remembering 9/11 by Dr. Brian Lippincott, a professor at John F. Kennedy University in California. Lippincott warns parents and teachers against "stereotyping people or countries that might be home to the terrorists," and urges them to "address the issue of blame factually by not suggesting any group is responsible." He states that "we have no reason to believe that the attacks on our country were part of an organized plan of any other country. The terrorists acted independently without the sanctions of any nation."

Lippincott does want parents and teachers to "discuss historical instances of American intolerance," however, such as the internment of Japanese Americans. His tips include politically-correct statements such as "America is strong because of our diversity," "Violence and hate are never solutions to anger" and "We need to work for peace in our communities and around the world." He asserts: "Protecting against harassment of our Arab American classmates and neighbors is most critical right now. But the issues of tolerance and inclusion go beyond this period in our national life together. We must embrace these values towards all Americans for all time. This includes race, religions,

(See *Blame America*, page 2)

Perpetuating a Bad IDEA Can the special ed law be reformed?

WASHINGTON, DC — The 25-year-old Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is up for congressional reauthorization, and a new bill is expected to be drafted this month in the U.S. House of Representatives. A final version may not emerge before the congressional recess in October.

Some critics believe IDEA is too flawed to be reformed because it has failed to provide disabled children with the "free appropriate public education" it promised when enacted in 1975. Instead, they say, it has become a bureaucratic nightmare that lowers teacher morale, encourages litigation, and "marginalizes the parents it was designed to empower." Even supporters admit that IDEA has created a complex and expensive quagmire of rules and regulations, with ever-increasing costs and administrative demands.

A Cato Institute Policy Analysis entitled *Escaping IDEA, Freeing Parents, Teachers, and Students through Deregulation and Choice*, dated July 10, 2002 states: "Though well intended, IDEA

wastes resources, increases costs and creates contention between parents and school officials. The \$78.3 billion spent on special education students at local, state, and federal levels accounts for 21.4% of the \$360.2 billion spent on elementary and secondary public education in the United States."

Cato recommends that special education "be reformed to allow parents to control how their child's educational dollars are spent in the public or private school of their choice."

The LD Label

According to Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Senior Fellow Jay P. Greene, "Almost the entire increase in special education enrollments can be attributed to a rise in one category, called 'specific learning disability.'" The number of students so identified "has more than tripled, from 1.8% of the student population in 1976-77 to 6% in 1998-99."

Greene's organization concurs with Cato on the solution. "The most powerful reform would 'voucherize' all students

who receive a special education diagnosis," he states.

Little Academic Benefit

Despite IDEA's cost, the placement of increasing numbers of children in special education has not resulted in academic improvement. Economist and researcher Eric Hanushek found that children diagnosed with learning disabilities realize only small gains, "not enough to noticeably affect a learning deficit let alone eliminate it."

A new report by the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (the Commission), entitled *A New Era*, concedes that "The focus on compliance and bureaucratic imperatives in the current system . . . fails too many children with disabilities."

Defining 'Disabilities'

Minnesota education researcher, pediatrician, and board member of the Maple River Education Coalition, Karen R. Effrem, attributes the burgeoning numbers of children in special education to the fact that "mental and emotional disorders" were added to IDEA in 1991. (See www.edwatch.org/updates/062602.htm.)

"The definition of a child with a men-

tal or emotional disability is terribly vague in the law," Effrem explains. "It is described as 'serious emotional disturbance, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities.'" For children ages 3-9, the definition is even more vague. "At the



Karen Effrem

discretion of the state and the local educational agency, a child may be included who is . . . experiencing developmental delays, as defined by the state and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development . . ."

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), the most common mental disorders in children, are in the "other health impairment" category. Dr. Effrem reports that since 1991 in Minnesota, the number of emotionally and behaviorally disturbed children has increased 136%; in the "other health impairment" category, the increase is 930% and has especially affected minority children.

(See *IDEA*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

At California colleges, hard luck stories and minority status are the best means for gaining admission, unless the minority status is Asian. An Asian student from a poor family with a SAT score of 1500 was turned down by UCLA while a Hispanic student with a similar background and a SAT score 390 points lower was accepted at both UCLA and Berkeley. Another Asian student with a SAT score of 1540 whose father is an engineer was rebuffed by both UCLA and Berkeley, and a middle class white student with a GPA of 4.0 and a SAT score of 1300 was rejected by three University of California schools. Critics charge that "sob story" admissions policies are replacing affirmative action, which California voters struck down in 1996. State universities now consider "life challenges" in lieu of GPAs and SAT scores, including "immigration hardships, living in high crime neighborhoods, having been a victim of a shooting, and long-term psychological difficulties." One critic called it "left-wing social engineering" that ultimately helps no one.

A California education oversight committee wants to eliminate high school Advanced Placement courses. The committee is urging the University of California to stop giving extra weight to AP courses in order to "level the playing field" for disadvantaged students who complain their high schools offer few such courses. According to the *Chicago Tribune* (7-5-02), the 47-year-old AP program "has grown dramatically in the past 10 years," with 1.6 million high school students taking the exams in 2002 compared with 600,000 in 1992.

Illinois students score poorly in writing. Four of 10 now write an organized essay using basic grammar and spelling, test results released this spring show. The percentage of 5th graders who write poorly crosses racial lines, and has continued to increase since the new test was introduced in 1999. Educators and experts say that students don't get enough instruction in writing and that many teachers are not adequately trained to teach it. The

(Continued on page 3)

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Ritalin Roundup Continues

NEW YORK, NY — Bronx resident Michele Lawson is among many New York City parents fighting school-recommended drug intervention for their children. The prescription of Ritalin has become so scandalous in the Big Apple that the New York Department of Education just sent a letter to all district superintendents stating: "Recent press accounts have reported that some school district personnel have allegedly made the admission of some students to school contingent upon parental agreement to administer Ritalin or other psychotropic medications. Please be advised that school district personnel have no authority to impose such a requirement."

According to the *New York Post* (8-8-02), Lawson was told that her six-year-old first-grade son Dominick needed medication because he was "disorganized, forgetful and had a problem staying in his seat." By 2nd grade, Lawson was forced to pay for a psychiatrist, who contradicted the school's contention that the child had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

But school officials continued to insist that Dominick needed medication and referred Lawson to New York Psychiatric Hospital, where a doctor prescribed Ritalin after reading a school report and interviewing the boy for 45 minutes. While acknowledging that her son has "issues," Lawson rejected the medication.

At a February hearing, school officials accused Lawson of neglect and threatened her with loss of parental rights. That's when she pulled Dominick out of public school and is now paying to send him to a private school.

Even the well-known and the well-to-do face coercion in the nationwide push to medicate school children with powerful drugs for questionable disorders. Neil Bush, brother of President George W. Bush, told the *New York Post* (8-14-02) that he "endured his own Ritalin hell seven years ago when educators in a Houston private school diagnosed his son, Pierce, now 16, with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and pushed medication."

Bush spent years researching the issue and found that "the educators were

wrong" about his son. "There is a systemic problem in this country, where schools are often forcing parents to turn to Ritalin," he said. "It's obvious to me that we have a crisis."

The *Post* pointed out that the forced drugging issue "isn't just an inner-city problem." Statistics show that children from the affluent suburbs "are more likely to be pressured by schools to medicate their kids than those in poor urban areas."

Lawsuit Filed in NY

New Jersey attorney Alan Milstein was expected to file a lawsuit by the end of August against school officials in Millbrook, NY on behalf of 12-year-old Michael Mozer, whose Ritalin woes began in 1997 when he was in first grade. Michael's mother, Patricia Weathers, said the school claimed her son "couldn't learn" unless he was medicated.



Neil Bush

Weathers told the *New York Times* last year (8-19-01) that by 4th grade, her son "was showing signs of severe anxiety," including chewing on paper and on his clothes. By then, he had been diagnosed by school officials as "bipolar" and was taking "a cocktail" of Dextrostat (a form of Ritalin) and the anti-depressant drug Paxil. Weathers said the drug combination caused Michael to become "psychotic" and "out of control."

The *New York Post* reported (8-7-02) that Weathers took her son off the drugs in December 1999 after he begged her to "make it stop — there's a person inside my head telling me to do bad things." School officials barred the child from attending school, then filed a complaint against Weathers with the New York Department of Children and Family Services. An investigation cleared her of wrongdoing. (She testified before a U.S. House Committee in 1999 about her son's ordeal.)

Michael now suffers from a heart murmur, which his mother believes is a result of the drugs.

Neil Bush thinks many parents fall for the ADD and ADHD diagnoses and subsequent drugging of their children because it explains why they aren't doing well in school. He now believes "it's the system that is failing to engage children in the classroom. My heart goes out to any parents who are being led to believe their kids have a disorder or are disabled." 🍎

Blame America (Continued from page 1)

ethnicity, sexual orientation, and those with special needs."

A link to a Public Broadcasting System (PBS) website called "America Responds," also directs teachers to "use the treatment of citizens of Japanese and German ancestry during World War II — looking specifically at media portrayals of these groups and internment camps — as historical examples of ethnic conflict during times of trial; explore the problems inherent in assigning blame to populations or nations of people." In other words, observers note, parents and schools are to use the first anniversary of the worst atrocity ever perpetrated against Americans on American soil as an opportunity to teach children to hate America.

portunity to teach children to hate America.

The NEA's "Advice to Parents" suggests focusing on "appreciating and getting along with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures, the importance of anger management and global awareness." An obvious question is how we could have gotten along with the 9/11 hijackers.

The NEA advised teachers to "create a low-key day of learning, not a return to the tragedy," but, as Eagle Forum President Phyllis Schlafly noted, "schools should stick to teaching more important subjects such as math, English and science," leaving the task of remembering what happened September 11 to parents.

Book of the Month



The Myth of Separation Between Church & State, Dee Wampler, 2002, 135 pps., \$12.50 + s/h

One of the enduring myths of our times is that the United States Constitution mandates the separation of church and state. Renowned Missouri attorney, Dee Wampler, dispels this myth in his quote-filled new book.

Wampler proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the intent of the Framers was to protect the free exercise of religion from government, not to protect government from religion. He documents the faith of our forefathers in their own words, beginning with Christopher Columbus's discovery of the Americas in the name of Jesus Christ to the unabashed Christianity of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and of our Constitution.

"Historical revisionists have erased [the Framers] repeated references to and reliance upon God," Wampler writes. "Over the past century, much of our religious heritage has been taken out of our history books. . . We are in danger of losing our heritage because the whole story is no longer being told."

Wampler points out that, contrary to the ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the First Amendment was intended to maintain a proper relationship between government and religion. The term *establishment of religion* was coined to prevent a national church.

Wampler states that the current view of the First Amendment is "not the product of constitutional intent, but of a bewildering array of Supreme Court decisions with a tendency to secularize the public life of the nation and to work a restrained but taxing persecution on Christians and other people of faith who want to integrate their faith with their public life." He writes that the Court during the past 50 years has prohibited public school students from reciting prayers before class and "stripped the Ten Commandments from classroom bulletin boards." He laments that the subject of religion has been completely eliminated from a curriculum still purporting to teach moral values, which "amounts to an establishment of secular humanism."

Wampler urges that, as a God-fearing nation (90% of Americans believe in God), we "end the scoffing at religion, especially at Christianity, that goes on among the self-anointed elites in the media, entertainment industry, and academia." Amen!

Write Dee Wampler, 1200-C East Woodhurst Dr., Springfield, MO 65804.

FOCUS: The Way They Used to Be — Excerpted from the June 30, 1922 Report of Public Schools of the State of Missouri

Issued by Sam A. Baker,
State Superintendent of Public
Schools, Jefferson City, Missouri

Young people must come in contact with that which lifts the mind higher. They must learn that it is a sacred privilege to live and have the opportunity of exercising the highest usefulness . . .

Is it not possible to impress the young people of today with the thought that they are really spiritual beings; that they are endowed with a human soul of substantial quality which has the power to live forever; that when we look upon an individual we do not really see the true person, but only the external body within which the soul is hidden? Is it possible that a real, good, earnest, faithful teacher can explain that our thoughts and feelings weave the quality of the soul? Can the living teacher show vividly that low and vicious ideas harbored in the mind

cause the growth of an ugly looking soul; and when pure, honest, useful, noble thoughts are nourished in the mind, then the soul acquires a beautiful appearance? These are realities that are universally true.

When the soul yearns for that which is good and useful and pure and uplifting, corresponding qualities will be attracted to it, thereby awakening a new tendency of growth that is capable of bursting forth in genuine enthusiasm.

True character growth is a matter of every day business. The process must not be separated from our necessary duties. All school work must have inherent in its performance the influence of moral and religious qualities. The schools will never rightly succeed unless there is a



constant and inseparable relation of all our thoughts and acts with the acknowledgment of the goodness of our Creator. The loving warmth of our hearts toward the Giver of all our opportunities must never be chilled by the cold blasts of materialistic tendencies. The world cannot afford to have the avenues for spiritual reception closed. The enlargement of life and true happiness will cease whenever that will take place . . . There must never be an absence of this influence. It is the deepest and most valuable current in the process of human growth and success. There can be no worthy citizenship nor lasting civilization without it. The schools must be permeated with the essence of this life-giving spiritual potency.

To rightly enjoy proper human development there must be an interior and willing conjunction with the creative force. This is the divine unchangeable

law. There is no escape. Being well grounded in these life principles opens the way for the free and spontaneous growth of all the useful virtues that pave the way for human happiness.

In the growing beauty of this new life it is easy to be sincere, politeness will be natural, the gifts of charity will flow wherever needed, kindness will do its duty and cheerfulness will touch its responsive chord, honesty will prevail because it is right and optimism will bloom everywhere, sympathy will lighten a brother's burdens and justice will be meted out to the rightful recipient, generosity will stretch out its helpful hand while patriotism throbs in every heart, courtesy will never forget to give its joys, and appreciation will stimulate a thousand good deeds. Love, loyalty, and toleration will rise high in every soul and have respect for age, regard for authority, and reverence for God.

'Mainstreaming' Is Main Problem Inclusion harms students, teachers

Special education statutes and case law dictate that while special education students must be "mainstreamed" into regular classrooms whenever possible, they do not have to follow the same rules or suffer the same consequences for their actions as their classmates do. A lawyer-turned-school teacher for the past seven years in Houston, Texas (who asked that his name be withheld) described for *Education Reporter* how IDEA "has destroyed discipline in the schools."

He stated that when high school students in special education programs are disciplined, an Admission, Review and Dismissal Committee (ARD) must decide if their infractions were related to their learning disabilities. If this is determined to be the case, no punishment may be given.

Despite the stringency of zero tolerance policies in most school districts, even serious infractions go unpunished if an ARD committee determines that a special education student's actions were caused by a learning disability. "I have seen a boy with a gun and another boy with a bayonet walk away," our source stated, "and a boy smoking marijuana would have gotten away with it but for my strenuous objections."

This source explained that the problem is federal control, despite the fact that federal dollars make up less than 10% of a school district's budget. Congressional mandate requires school districts accepting federal dollars (which is most, if not all) to obey federal special education dictates. "What happens in practice," our source continued, "is that these statutes are interpreted by state agencies and school districts, with instructions set out in detail for ARD committees. These committees, made up of teachers, must

answer specific questions dictated by the state. In the case of the boy with the gun, the ARD committee was asked if his reading disability related to his act of

"I've walked miles shadowing my charges while they destroy school property, bang on classroom windows, and scream obscenities."
— T. Kelly Rossiter

carrying a gun in his backpack. The argument was made that his inability to read was 'related' because, had he been a better reader, he would have known not to carry a gun."

"It is indeed that ludicrous," our source assured us. "Remember, these are teachers, not lawyers, and although they mean well, the threat of a lawsuit hangs over the entire proceeding, and they are under pressure to avoid lawsuits." In a 1999 column entitled "Specially Ill-Educated," appearing in a promotional issue of *The American Enterprise* magazine, teacher T. Kelly Rossiter told a similar tale. "IDEA seeks to incorporate disabled students into the regular curriculum," Rossiter wrote. "Section 504 [of the law] expands the traditional definition of 'disabled.' In combination, these laws create a reaction more explosive than anything ever seen in chemistry class."

Rossiter described how "students with a very loosely defined set of 'behavioral difficulties'" receive special civil rights protection and can't be disciplined. "I've walked miles shadowing my charges while they destroy school property, bang on classroom windows, and scream ob-

scenities to both students and staff," he wrote.

Rossiter blames "parent advocacy groups backed by phalanxes of attorneys and funding from the Department of Education," which prod parents to sue. He described a situation in California's Ocean View School District, where a student with a "communicative disorder" developed a history of attacking students, kicking staff members, and biting teachers. "Claiming the school set [the boy] up for failure," Rossiter explained, "Jimmy P.'s father refused to allow him to be removed from mainstream classrooms." The school sought an injunction to override the father's objection and, although it passed muster in state court, a federal court overturned it, ruling that injuries caused by Jimmy "weren't enough to warrant removal."

Rossiter told of both male and female students who fail their classes because they refuse to open their textbooks and who curse teachers and principals. "Even with an army of aides it's impossible to prevent this behavior," he asserted, "when 'behaviorally disabled' students know that no disciplinary measures can be taken. But it's happening now with your tax dollars in your schools, in the name of civil rights."

Nationally-syndicated columnist Michelle Malkin observed in an editorial in the *Washington Times* (4-13-01) that "IDEA's concept of 'mainstreaming' is based not on sound science but on political science." Malkin wrote that "zealous activists, embracing a radical egalitarian agenda, pushed for the integration of all disabled kids into the public schools at all costs. But," she asks, "is such forced and illusory 'inclusion' worth the price?"

Most parents would doubtless say no if they realized full inclusion's potential for tragedy. In 1994, a 15-year-old special education student classified as having a behavior disorder was mainstreamed

into regular classrooms in suburban St. Louis without a paper trail to show the extent of his problems. After leaving his controlled environment, his infractions included roaming school halls and hanging around in girls' restrooms.

Expelling him was not an option because the boy's actions were deemed related to his disability. Instead, the school district transferred him to another high school, where he raped and murdered a 15-year-old girl in the girls' restroom in Jan. 1995. He was convicted of the crimes in 1998 and sentenced to life in prison. (See *Education Reporter*, Feb. 1995 and May 1998.)

Inclusion can also be tragic for children with serious physical disabilities. An educator in Illinois writes *Education Reporter*: "One of the saddest sights I see every day is a child functioning at a two-year-old level with little controllable physical movement who is forced to sit in her wheelchair hour after hour in the 4th- and 5th- grade classrooms. Naturally, she is bored and begins to loudly yelp, which is disruptive to the class."

"The aide who takes care of her during the day thought she had found a solution because the child enjoys the noise of the kindergarten class. When the aide wheeled the girl into the kindergarten classroom, she made sounds of joy. Unfortunately, when her mother, an inclusion fanatic, heard that her daughter was spending part of the day in kindergarten, she forbade that from happening again, all in the pretense of normalcy!"

Briefs (Continued from page 2)

Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) in reading, writing and math are given annually to 3rd 5th and 8th graders. Results of the other tests were "generally as bad" as those of the writing test. (*Chicago Tribune*, 8-4-02)

IDEA (Continued from page 1)

A Troubling IDEA

IDEA may benefit truly disabled children, but the law's impact on normal children is troubling. Studies show that many of those labeled with "specific learning disabilities" are simply illiterate. The introduction to the report of the President's Commission (*A New Era*) contains the following facts:

◆ "Half of the six million children in special education are identified as having 'a specific learning disability.'" This group "has grown 319% since 1976."

◆ "Of those with 'specific learning disabilities,' 80% are there simply because they haven't learned how to read. Thus, many children identified for special education — up to 40% — are there because they weren't taught to read . . . Sadly, few children placed in special education close the achievement gap to a point where they can read and learn like their peers."

◆ "Children of minority status are over-represented in some categories of special education. African-American children are twice as likely as white children to be labeled mentally retarded and placed in special education. They are also more likely to be labeled and placed as emotionally disturbed."

The Commission blamed "reliance on IQ tests that have known cultural bias" and "behavioral characteristics associated with the cultural context in which a child is raised" for the over-representation of minorities in special education, but its own report states that many children (presumably including minority children) are not being taught to read.

Instead of recommending intensive phonics instruction in kindergarten and first grade, one of the Commission's many recommendations for improving special education is to "screen all children for learning and behavioral difficulties in the early grades."

"There is absolutely nothing wrong with early academic screening to diagnose correctable learning problems that will prevent misidentification for special education," Dr. Effrem points out. "As a pediatrician, I strongly support this idea. Another pediatrician reported that when his ADHD-labeled patients were taught to read properly using phonics, their behavior problems disappeared." (See www.nrrf.org/article_campbell.htm)

But Effrem believes that the inaccuracy of the process of "mass and early behavioral screening and intervention," will yield "too many false positives." The likely result is that these screenings will steer children into special interventions by psychologists and social workers, and lead to medication with powerful drugs like Ritalin that have dangerous side effects.

Such "interventions" will do little to help children identified with "specific learning disabilities" when an obvious solution is for public schools to teach phonics in K-1. Research dating back to the turn of the 20th century indicates that early phonics instruction (before other methods are taught) creates good readers, and more recent research shows that minority children especially benefit from such instruction. (See *Education Reporter*, July 2002, and www.noexcuses.org)

Special education teacher Sandy Bowen of Topeka, Kansas told *Education Reporter* that the subject of phonics was "censored" at the college she attended. "If I hadn't been getting information from Focus on the Family and Eagle Forum," she stated, "I'd have thought that anyone who wanted to teach phonics was a child abuser."

When Bowen discovered that her son, then in 2nd grade, was unable to sound out words, she confronted the school, but was told to "immerse the child in literature" and he would "bloom." While the elementary school eventually returned to phonics, the boy is now a struggling reader in high school, and his parents are trying to repair the damage with Phyllis Schlafly's *Turbo Reader* and other phonics programs. Sandy Bowen laments that "many young men and women will graduate [from college] believing the lie that they have some sort of reading 'disorder' when in fact the 'disorder' lies in our teacher training programs."

The Drug Connection

The labeling of children with "specific learning disabilities," and the prescribing of psychiatric drugs that often follows is of particular concern as IDEA's reauthorization looms. According to data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), powerful psychostimulant drugs such as Ritalin were prescribed or refilled 5.3 million times during 2000, nearly double the rate in 1995-1996.

"If IDEA is fully funded, the already frightening level of child psychiatric labeling and drugging will increase exponentially," Karen Effrem worries. She recommends "a large disincentive in the law to discourage such labeling" which would help reverse this trend and support what has happened in several states.

Connecticut and Virginia have enacted laws prohibiting the recommendation of psychotropic medications to students by school personnel, and Minnesota has passed a law preventing parents from being penalized if they refuse these drugs for their children. California, New York, Florida, Arizona, Texas, and New Jersey are considering similar bills.

Effrem also believes that other academic, social and medical reasons for a child's misbehavior must be considered before medication, and that parents should be warned of the potential serious side effects of psychotropic medications before they are recommended and prescribed.

Early Childhood Connection

The Foundations for Learning Act, sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy and Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), was amended to the massive federal No Child Left Behind law signed by President Bush in January. Its purpose is "to provide mental health services to eligible children

"If IDEA is fully funded, the already frightening level of child psychiatric drugging and labeling will increase exponentially."

— Dr. Karen Effrem

[ages 0-7] and, when necessary, to promote the child's healthy development . . ."

The Foundations for Learning Act provides federal grants to states and other agencies for preschool screenings, parent education, social services, home visits, transportation and curriculum to support "social and emotional development." A child is eligible if he "has been removed from child care, Head Start, or preschool for behavioral reasons or is at risk of being so removed" or if "the child has been exposed to parental depression or other mental illness." (Emphasis added.)

According to Dr. Effrem, "these grants will further subsidize the labeling and drugging of an alarmingly large population of young children with potent medications that have not been studied in that age group." She cites the Feb. 2000 *Journal of the American Medical Association's* report of a study that shows "a 300% increase in the use of psychotropics in two-to-four-year-olds between 1991 and 1995, including 3,000 prescriptions for Prozac for infants less than one year old."

"The federal government has no constitutional authority to be involved in mental health and early childhood issues and its record of success for these types of programs is abysmal," Effrem states. "Head Start is the nation's oldest and largest preschool program with a mental health component and home visitation, just as the Foundations for Learning Act provides. Despite 37 years, more than \$44

billion, at least 17 million children, and more than 600 studies, there is no evidence that Head Start works. According to the GAO, the Dept. of Health and Human Services and even one of Head Start's co-founders, any benefits are gone by the time the child reaches 2nd grade and these programs do not prevent later juvenile delinquency." (See www.edwatch.org/updates/052302.)

How does the Foundations for Learning Act relate to IDEA? According to *A New Era*, IDEA should be "aligned" with No Child Left Behind and other federal education laws. "IDEA should be revamped to require states to set ambitious goals for special education in alignment with the No Child Left Behind Act . . . we must insist that all students in special education make strides towards challenging and appropriate learning and developmental goals."

Dr. Effrem notes that "these 'goals' have less to do with academics than with attitudes values, behaviors and beliefs, which are not in the realm of traditional academics, but in the realm of psychiatry and psychology. The standards used to determine if a child has a specific learning disability must remain academic, as they were when IDEA was originally enacted. Then, the standards included 'basic reading skills, mathematical computation and written expression.' The new law must do more than pay lip service to these critical academic basics." 

Excerpts from the Nebraska State Board of Education's

RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Whereas, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled on June 26, 2002 in *Newdow v. U.S. Congress* that both the 1954 act adding the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance and the teacher-led recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, with the added words included, in public schools violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution; and **Whereas**, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has no jurisdiction over the Great State of Nebraska, meaning that its ruling in *Newdow v. U.S. Congress* lacks controlling authority here; and

Whereas, the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, including the words "under God," in the public schools of the Great

State of Nebraska is an affirmation of the respect which its citizens have for the United States of America and the flag which represents it;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved By The Nebraska State Board of Education:

1. That the Nebraska State Board of Education supports the Pledge of Allegiance as it is currently written and recited, including the words "under God."
2. That the Nebraska State Board of Education strongly urges and encourages all public, private, denominational, and parochial schools in the Great State of Nebraska to lead their students in the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance as it is currently written, including the words "under God."

