

House Passes Bill To Keep Pledge Out of Federal Courts



The U.S. House of Representatives voted 247-173 on September 23 to strip federal courts of jurisdiction over cases involving recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Sponsored by Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO), the Pledge Protection Act is authorized by a provision in the Constitution giving Congress the power to make exceptions to federal court jurisdiction.



Rep. Todd Akin

The bill was a shot across the bow to federal judges who have attempted to strike the words "under God" from the Pledge, which is recited in schools across the country and by new U.S. citizens.

In 2002 the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals declared teacher-led recitation of the Pledge in public schools unconstitu-

tional under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Amid overwhelming condemnation by Congress and the public, the case was appealed to the Supreme Court, which reversed the 9th Circuit decision on a technicality in June this year. However, disappointed plaintiff Michael Newdow has encouraged others to bring similar suits in the future and it is unclear how the Supreme Court would rule on the merits of such a case. (See *Education Reporter*, Sept. 2004.)

Akin observed that the Supreme Court is likely to rule against the Pledge eventually "if we allow activist judges to start creating law and say that it is wrong to somehow allow schoolchildren to say 'under God' in the Pledge." His bill attracted 226 co-sponsors.

"Many federal judges have made no secret of their hostility to traditional values and religion in the public square,"

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) said in a written statement after the vote, "and the Pledge Protection Act will make sure those judges can't impose their personal prejudices on the rest of us. State courts should be free to determine this issue without the interference of unaccountable federal judges."



House Majority Leader Tom DeLay

House Democrats opposing the bill in debate said majority Republicans were debasing the Constitution in order to force a vote that could hurt Democrats in the November election. The bill, which does not prevent Pledge cases from being heard in state courts, is sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) in the Senate.

Teacher Wins Suit to Lead After-School Bible Lessons



A teacher has the constitutional right to lead after-school Bible classes offered in the school where she works, a federal appeals court ruled in September.

"Does a school's concern for avoiding accusations of establishment of religion justify inhibiting the free speech and association rights of employees after work hours when the relevant activity takes place on school property?" the 8th Circuit opinion asks. "In this case, we do not believe so."

The plaintiff, a South Dakota elementary-school teacher, sued because of a district policy barring employees from participating in religious activities on school grounds. The lower court permitted her participation in Good News Club meetings at other public schools but not at the one where she taught. On appeal, she won a total victory. She was represented by Liberty Counsel.

The Supreme Court in 2001 held that after-school religious groups must have the same access to public schools as other clubs.

God Walks a Fine Line in Schools

If you wonder exactly what public school students, teachers, administrators and school boards can say and do about religion, you are not alone. The law in this area is notoriously fluid, frequently changing with new federal court decisions.

In 1963 the U.S. Supreme Court prohibited administrators and faculty from organizing or leading prayers or Bible study groups in public schools, basing its decision on the Constitution's Establishment Clause. Numerous not-always-reconcilable high court decisions followed over the past 40 years, some of which have necessitated striking a balance between the Establishment Clause and other First Amendment concerns including free speech and free exercise of religion.

Federal guidelines

Current federal Education Department guidelines explain that the First Amendment allows a student to pray in school so long as it is not disruptive, to distribute religious literature on the same basis as other literature, and to try to persuade peers about religious topics. Supreme Court decisions bar school-organized prayer at graduation, celebration of Christian holidays, and teaching religious doctrine.

Students can don a Jesus T-shirt, pray before class and moralize about the Ten Commandments, but a teacher can't publicly endorse or condemn these practices.

Under a 2001 Supreme Court decision, religious groups must have the same access to school premises as other groups. (See sidebar on teachers' rights to lead after-school religious clubs.)

In October, the Supreme Court accepted a case involving the display of the Ten Commandments in school. Stay tuned.

Recent clashes

Clashes inevitably occur over specific issues. The Shelby County, TN school board flouted political correctness by voting last January to call the mid-year vacation "Christmas break" on the school calendar. The executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee called the move shocking. (commercialappeal.com, 1-30-04)

A Dupo, IL senior was suspended from his school's TV broadcast for a month for saying "God bless" last December (see *Education Reporter*, Mar. 2004), but was reinstated by the school board at a meeting packed with the student's supporters. The board president said the board doesn't have a problem with an occasional "God bless" over the air as long as it isn't a staple of the show. The American Center for Law and Justice was prepared to file a federal lawsuit on the student's behalf if the outcome had been different. (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 1-27-04)

A federal appeals court ruled in July that a South Carolina municipal council may no longer offer Christian invocations before monthly meetings. The 4th Circuit ruling in favor of a Wicca practitioner threatens the practice in some Southern communities of starting school board meetings with Christian prayers. Supreme Court precedents allow a legislative body to invoke divine guidance before engaging in public business, but not to affiliate itself with a specific faith. (*Education Week*,

8-11-04)

The East Hanover, NJ school board narrowly voted in May to fly a small white flag that says "One Nation Under God" at each of three schools and the administration building. The flags were provided by the Knights of Columbus to show support for U.S. troops overseas. The East Hanover township council unanimously approved a similar request for municipal buildings. The school board's move was denounced by a representative of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. (*New Jersey Star-Ledger*, 5-5-04)

Bible course okayed

In Boca Raton, FL, a high school has begun offering Biblical studies elective classes in order to teach "the most influential book or document in Western civilization," not to impose Christianity on students, according to the principal. The Supreme Court and the state department of education permit such courses. An offended science teacher at the school objected that "a high school teacher who knows enough about the Bible to teach it must believe it to be true." (PalmBeachPost.com, 2-26-04)

More court decisions

A federal district court in Virginia held in October that the Loudon County school district engaged in prohibited viewpoint discrimination in violation of the First Amendment when it removed bricks displaying a cross from a "walkway of fame" inscribed with students' names and



Southern Baptists Debate Call to Avoid Public Schooling

A resolution calling on Southern Baptists to take their children out of public schools is being considered at ten state conventions this fall.

A similar resolution failed at the national Southern Baptist Convention in June. Noting that "millions of children in government schools spend seven hours a day, 180 days a year being taught that God is irrelevant to every area of life," it urged parents to homeschool or use Christian schools instead of public schools. (See *Education Reporter*, Sept. 2004.)

Activists in Texas, Virginia, Missouri, Tennessee, California, South Carolina, Illinois, Florida, North Carolina and New England will try to pass their resolutions at state conventions being held this fall.

achievements while allowing bricks displaying secular symbols. The displays were funded by donors. Having created the walkway as a limited public forum, the district could not deny donors the opportunity to highlight the achievement of students in matters of faith or religion when it allowed recognition of athletic, academic or other achievements, the court stated. (See *Fine Line*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

More than 1 in 5 public school teachers choose private schools for their own children, reports a study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. This makes public school teachers almost twice as likely as other parents to choose private schools. (*Washington Times*, 9-27-04)

96% of parents say a 'pro-abstinence message' is best for teens, concludes a poll commissioned by Focus on the Family. Another 91% expressed the view that teens should be taught that it is best for sexual activity to be linked to love, intimacy and commitment. (*United Press International*, 1-28-04)

Kansas City schools pay students for C grades.

Over the summer, Kansas City became the first large school district in the country known to pay students for grades. With good attendance and at least a C average, students received gift cards worth up to \$150. Some 67 Missouri school districts offer financial incentives to students. (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 9-5-04)

Denver limits display of Mexican flags in schools after flap.

An August back-to-school newspaper photograph of a classroom depicting a Mexican flag next to a U.S. flag sparked complaints that spurred officials to restrict the display of foreign banners. The principal removed two Mexican flags from the 84% Hispanic high school, and a policy is being developed to require any display of foreign flags to be temporary and related to what is being taught in class. (*Associated Press*, 8-20-04)

College bases freshman grades 60% on 'effort.' Columbia, SC's Benedict College now bases grades for freshmen 60% on "effort" and 40% on academic performance. For sophomores, the ratio is 50-50. Two professors have been fired for refusing to follow the policy. (*wistv.com*, 8-20-04)

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Congress Passes Bill On Suicide Prevention

Congress approved legislation in September to set aside \$82 million over the next three years for programs aimed at preventing youth suicide. The money would go to states, Indian tribes, colleges and universities to develop suicide prevention and intervention programs.

During the House debate, some lawmakers questioned the effectiveness of suicide-prevention programs, saying some end up doing more harm than good. Rep. Scott Garrett (R-NJ) cited the example of a Michigan 2nd-grade boy who killed himself after watching a film in a suicide-prevention class. People who knew the boy said he was not depressed at the time of his death and may have been copying what he saw in the film, Garrett said.

In the movie shown in the suicide-prevention class, the boy who tried to

hang himself was rescued by his friends. "In real life that did not occur," Garrett pointed out. (*Associated Press*, 9-9-04)

Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR) sponsored the bill as a tribute to his son, who killed himself at age 22 a year before the vote. Reps. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS) and Bart Stupak (D-MI) have also lost teenage sons to suicide.

Suicide education was a big issue in 1980s, but efforts to appropriate federal funds failed after expert testimony and studies showed that classroom courses did no good for children and could increase the risk of suicide. (*See Education Reporter*, Apr.-May 1987.)



Rep. Garrett opposed

Ending 'Social Promotion' Called Success In NYC, Which Extends Plan to 5th Grade

New York City school leaders, who weathered intense criticism months ago for holding back failing 3rd-graders, announced in September that the program was so successful that they plan to expand it to 5th grade.

The plan would make any 5th-graders scoring at the lowest of four levels on city tests repeat the grade unless they do better on the tests after summer school or a review of their classwork shows their skills are adequate for promotion.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg promised \$20 million for programs to identify struggling 5th-graders early and to provide tutoring and other help outside of school hours.

The "summer success academy" held for 3rd-graders facing retention this past summer showed that aggressive intervention can boost students' skills

enough to warrant promotion, the mayor and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein said in prepared remarks on September 9.

Of the 10,000-plus 3rd-graders who faced repeating a grade in June, more than 4,200 improved their test scores enough after the summer program to be promoted, and more than 2,500 were promoted after their classwork was reviewed. This left only 3,600 to repeat the grade, only slightly more than in 2003, before the new policy went into effect. (*Education Week*, 9-22-04)



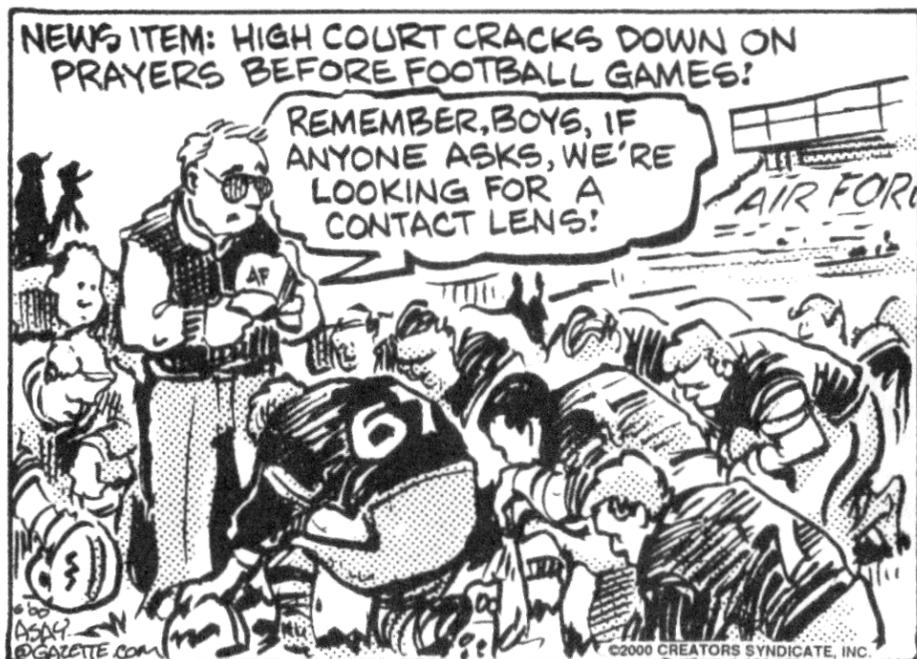
Joel Klein

Suggestive Math Test Raises Eyebrows

A Maryland school district apologized to parents in September after a 10th-grade geometry teacher gave students a math test filled with inappropriate questions.

The test contained phrases like "Jose has two ounces of cocaine," "Willie gets \$200 for a stolen BMW," and "Raul gets

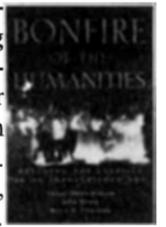
six years for murder," officials in Prince George's County confirmed. A parent said her child reported that the teacher explained the meaning of terms like "cutting" drugs. (*nbc4.com*, 9-29-04)



Book of the Month



Bonfire of the Humanities: Rescuing the Classics in an Impoverished Age, Victor Davis Hanson, John Heath and Bruce S. Thornton, ISI Books, 2001, 334 pp., \$24.95.



Classics professors are an endangered species, and they have only themselves to blame, three California state university classics teachers argue in this often-tedious but ultimately sensible collection of essays.

Too many pages are devoted to faculty infighting about issues of no interest to the general reader and to the inane arguments of multicultural, postmodern, deconstructionist and/or feminist classicists who have turned off generations of students. The red meat of the book comes at the end – Victor Davis Hanson's stirring condensation of his book *Who Killed Homer?*

Hanson makes the case for classics that his leftist colleagues should be making with their students – namely, that Western civilization's great accomplishments in human freedom and democracy got their start in ancient Greece, which was unique in its embrace of free inquiry, social dissent, self-criticism and democratic institutions. Yes, it used slaves, sequestered women and enfranchised only a small proportion of the population, but it was way ahead of every other society of its time, and we are its beneficiaries.

The epilogue is worth reading if only for gossip value and comic relief: it recounts the wacky episode of a feminist rival claiming on the internet to have given the names of Hanson and Heath to the FBI in connection with the manhunt for the Unabomber.

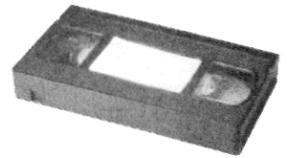
A flavor of sour grapes permeates the book, as the authors resent the status, perks and light class loads conferred on tenured professors at research universities in return for the production of arcane articles read by only a handful of specialists. It may be quixotic to expect research universities to reward good teaching more than original research.

In the case of the classics, however, it is difficult to do interesting original research. After all, the texts are a couple of millennia old and scholarly commentary has been accumulating for many centuries. What is desperately needed is teachers who can make the texts relevant to students, whose enrollment in classics and dead languages has plummeted in recent decades.

"There are now five or six classics professors in the country for every senior classics major," Hanson notes. From 1962 to 1976, high school Latin enrollment plunged by 80%, from 700,000 to 150,000.

The authors are surely correct in observing that only a rededication to teaching and to classical ideals can save classics departments from extinction. However, they should tell their publisher how to spell "Western" on the dust jacket.

FOCUS: The Roots of the Ultra Left: What They Really Think



The following is a transcript of selected excerpts of a new 95-minute documentary produced by the Leadership Institute for use by student groups on college campuses. The hard-hitting video gives a short history of socialism, provides outrageous quotes from dozens of famous leftists, and includes commentary by conservatives such as David Horowitz, Judge Robert Bork, Walter Williams, Grover Norquist, Ann Coulter and Rev. Jerry Falwell. A trailer of the video can be viewed at www.leadershipinstitute.org. To order the video, contact Michelle Miller at 703-247-2000.

1. What Socialists Really Think About Economics

Helen Caldicott, Union of Concerned Scientists, quoted by Dixy Lee Ray in her book *Trashing the Planet*, 1990: "Free enterprise really means rich people get richer. They have the freedom to exploit and psychologically rape their fellow human beings in the process... Capitalism is destroying the earth."

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY), at a Democratic fund-raiser in San Francisco, reported by Associated Press, June 28, 2004: "Many of you are well off enough that ... the tax cuts may have helped you. We're saying that for America to get back on track, we're probably going to cut that short and not give it to you. We're going to take things away from you on behalf of the common good."



Jerome Christenson, Wisconsin columnist, *LaCrosse Tribune*, February 4, 2004: "The fact is government — all government — spends our money better than we do."

Rebuttal by Grover Norquist:

"We've seen what happens when you increase taxes. ... When you cut marginal tax rates you have more job creation and more wealth creation. When you raise marginal tax rates you have less."

"The government cannot create wealth. The government cannot create jobs. Government can only take things that other people create and give them to other people, usually holding on to a rather significant handling fee. ...

"From the pharaohs to medieval kings the elite with power have always felt that they can spend the wealth of the nation better than the peasants or the farmers or working men and women. And today's bureaucrats and politicians are just like the pharaohs. They'd rather have pyramids whereas the people might prefer to have bread."

2. What Socialists Really Think About Your Family And Our American Culture

Dr. Mary Jo Bane, assistant professor of education at Wellesley College, quoted in *New Dimensions* magazine, July

1990: "In order to raise children with equality, we must take them away from families and communally raise them."

Linda Gordon, "Functions of the Family," *WOMEN: A Journal of Liberation*, Fall 1969: "The nuclear family must be destroyed, and people must find better ways of living together... Families have supported oppression by separating people into small, isolated units, unable to join together to fight for common interests."

Germaine Greer, author, *The Female Eunuch*, 1970: "Women's liberation, if it abolishes the patriarchal family, will abolish a necessary substructure of the authoritarian state, and once that withers away Marx will have come true willy-nilly, so let's get on with it."

Rebuttal by Jerry Falwell:

"Whether we're talking about same-sex marriages or polygamist arrangements or group raising of children, ... all the examinations that have been done by the religious and non-religious culture indicate that God's idea of Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, is by far still the best and only way to raise children."

Andrea Dworkin, author, *The Root Cause: Our Blood: Prophecies and Discourses On Sexual Politics*, 1975: "Only when manhood is dead — and it will perish when ravaged femininity no longer sustains it — only then will we know what it is to be free."

Robin Morgan, feminist author, former editor of *MS* magazine, from her book *The Demon Lover*, 1989: "I feel that 'man-hating' is an honorable and viable political act, that the oppressed have a right to class-hatred against the class that is oppressing them."

Rebuttal by Phyllis Schlafly:

"I think that God made us in two different kinds and the feminist movement really starts from the assumption that God goofed, and they're trying to remedy his mistake. I think that would be a pity because it is more fun having people in two different kinds."

3. What Socialists Really Think About Liberty

Michael Moore, film producer, from his book *Dude Where's My Country*: "These bastards who run our country are a bunch of conniving, thieving, smug pricks who need to be brought down and removed and replaced with a whole new system that we control."

President Bill Clinton, speech, August 12, 1993: "If the personal freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution inhibit the government's ability to govern the people, we should look to limit those guarantees."

Rebuttal by Cong. Mike Pence:

"Human involvement in government throughout history has been the impulse

to control — to exercise power over other people. The great miracle of the American experiment was the creation of a limited government. Which we call a republic — a government that respects the rights of individuals and understands that the real power and the real energy in a society doesn't ever generate out of government ... it's in that model that's created the greatest, the freest, and wealthiest nation on the planet."

Chester Pierce, professor of educational psychiatry at Harvard University, speech at the Childhood International Seminar in Denver, 1972: "Every child in America entering school at the age of five is insane because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our Founding Fathers, toward his parents, toward our elected officials, toward a belief in a supernatural being, and toward the sovereignty of this nation as a separate entity. It's up to you, teachers, to make all these sick children well by creating the international child of the future."

Professor Robert Brandon, chairman, Department of Philosophy, Duke University, commenting in 2004 about a survey showing Duke has so few conservatives or Republicans on its faculty: "If, as John Stuart Mill said, stupid people are generally conservative, then there are lots of conservatives we will never hire."



Professor Robert Brandon

Rebuttal by David Horowitz:

"There is ... on American campuses a very hard intellectual garbage and communist propaganda — I can't put it any other way. Howard Zinn has written the most popular history book of our time. It's called 'A People's History of America.' It sold a million hardback copies, I think. ... It is a Stalinist cartoon. ... It is intellectually completely unrespectable. But it is taught. And, in fact, he was just honored by the Organization of American Historians, which is run by a bunch of Marxists. ...

"Universities are a left-wing monolith these days. A conservative professor, or a Republican or evangelical Christian professor, is as rare as a unicorn. ...

"The fact of the matter is there's a discouragement of conservatives from applying for academic jobs but it has nothing to do with alternative employment. It has everything to do with the fact that conservative students are abused from the time they're freshmen and made to understand that the university is an entirely hostile environment to conservative ideas and therefore they should have their heads examined before they attempt to pursue an academic career since they will be thwarted at every point."

4. What Socialists Really Think About The Future Of America In The World

Professor Nicky De Genova, Columbia University, at a "teach-in" at Columbia as the U.S. war with Iraq began, March 26, 2003: "The only true heroes are those who find ways that help defeat the U.S. military. I personally would like to see a million Mogadishus."

President Bill Clinton, *New York Times*, November 25, 1997: "There are a lot of very brilliant people who believe that the nation-state is fast becoming a relic of the past."

Walter Cronkite, former CBS News anchor, at the United Nations, October 19, 1999, accepting the World Federalist Association's Norman Cousins Global Governance Award: "It seems to many of us that if we are to avoid the eventual catastrophic world conflict we must strengthen the United Nations as a first step toward a world government patterned after our own government with a legislature, executive and judiciary, and police to enforce its international laws and keep the peace. To do that, of course, we Americans will have to yield up some of our sovereignty."

John Kerry, anti-war activist, during an interview with the *Harvard Crimson*, February 18, 1970: "I'm an internationalist. I'd like to see our troops dispersed through the world only at the directive of the United Nations."

Strobe Talbott, Clinton Administration Deputy Secretary of State, *Time* magazine, July 20, 1992: "In the next century, nations as we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single, global authority. National sovereignty wasn't such a great idea after all."

Rebuttal by Phyllis Schlafly:

"The UN is completely corrupt and we certainly do not want the UN to invade our sovereignty by having anything to say about the deployment of American troops or about our policies abroad."

Jane Fonda, actress, at University of Michigan, November 21, 1970: "I would think that if you understood what communism was, you would hope, you would pray on your knees, that we would someday become communists."



Jane Fonda

Rebuttal by David Horowitz:

"Marx is a crackpot. And the only thing you can say in his behalf is that he didn't live to see the hundred million people killed and the billions made poor by his crackpot theory. But today's leftists saw that and they're going on with it. So how can you have any respect for them?"

Districts Get Tough on Junk Food

Concerns about the nation's obesity epidemic has led school districts around the country to crack down on junk food in schools.

The Texas Department of Agriculture has issued policies to phase out fried foods, bring in fresh fruits and vegetables, restrict portions, reduce consumption of soda, candy and trans fats, and limit bake sales in 93% of the state's public and charter schools. (*Houston Chronicle*, 3-4-04)

After a public backlash, the department agreed to allow cupcakes and birthday cakes on special days, but not until after lunch. (*Wall Street Journal*, 9-3-04)

Chicago has banned carbonated drinks and vending machine junk food. (*Associated Press*, 4-21-04) Alabama has targeted soft drinks and snacks in vending machines. (*Associated Press*, 12-8-03) New Haven, CT has established at least one "junk food-free school." (*Associated Press*, 4-38-04)

A school in Duxbury, MA has gone so far as to prohibit all food sent from home for birthday celebrations. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 9-9-04)

California passed a law last year prohibiting the sale of sodas in schools statewide. Arkansas then banned student access to vending machines in elementary schools. Four other states — Colorado, Louisiana, Tennessee and Washington — have passed laws either restricting vending-machine sales or encouraging schools to investigate how they can supply more nutritious food.

In early October the U.S. Senate held a hearing on the proposed Childhood Obesity Reduction Act, which would set up a congressional council on childhood obesity and an independent foundation to award obesity-prevention grants. (*Education Week*, 10-13-04)

A report by Duke University researchers last March concluded that childhood obesity has risen to a point that it can be considered an epidemic: 15.6% of American children between 12 and 19 were obese in 2002, up from 6.1% in 1974, according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (See also *Education Reporter*, Nov. 2003.)

But watch out for video games

Even as schools are lowering the boom on non-nutritious food, on-line video games are targeting children with ads for cookies, candies, cereal, chips and soda. "Advergaming" are appearing on dozens of sites from companies such as Kraft, Pepsico, McDonald's and Hershey Foods. The advergaming sites are promoted on food packages, in TV commercials, and on Yahoo and other internet portals. Some games integrate brands into the play.

One example is the video basketball game Oreos Dunk 'N Slam at Nabiscoworld.com. Banners behind the virtual basket read "Oreo Lick 'em!!!" and "Oreo Dunk 'em!!!" (*Wall Street Journal*, 5-3-04)

Teacher Kicked Out for Displaying President's Photo...

A New Jersey middle school teacher was ordered to leave her school in early October for refusing an order to remove a photo of President George W. Bush from her classroom display of photos of various U.S. presidents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. She was subsequently reassigned to a different school.

It all started at a parents' night when a mother complained about the picture. Some parents then e-mailed school officials claiming that the teacher had suppressed the free speech of her students — with some questioning why she liked George Bush even though "he's killed people."

The Monmouth Junction school principal and assistant principal decided that either the photo or the teacher had to go, accusing her of "partisanship," "hatred" and "inflammatory ways," the teacher, Shiba Pillai-Diaz, told WABC Radio. She pleads guilty to admiring President Bush but denies discussing politics in the classroom. "I never said 'I am a Republican' or 'I support the president,'" she maintained. (*Home News Tribune*, 10-3-04)

Sen. Jon Corzine (D-NJ) said school officials had gone overboard. "I don't see why [a picture] of the President of the United States can't be displayed," he told WABC Radio, pledging to assist the teacher if she contacts his office. (10-3-04)

Pillai-Diaz said she plans to post the picture of the president in her new classroom. (*Associated Press*, 10-8-04)

... While Another Shows 'Fahrenheit 9/11' with Principal's Okay

A Texas teacher showed the anti-President Bush documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11" in an English class at an alternative public high school. The father of one of the students objected to showing the R-rated, highly partisan Michael Moore film to 17-year-olds.



Michael Moore

"It is spun to a very liberal viewpoint," Beaumont businessman and veteran Michael Kurth told the *Associated Press*. "It's absolutely wrong for teachers to take a political position with some of these kids at legal voting age." (10-9-04)

The school principal had previewed the film and told the *Beaumont Enterprise* he "didn't hear anything that was offensive." (10-9-04) However, in the interest of equal time, he announced that the film "Stolen Honor" would be shown to the students. That film is critical of President Bush's opponent, Senator John Kerry. (*al.com*, 8-16-04)

Other incidents of leftist propaganda



President George W. Bush

in schools have led David Horowitz to advocate that his Academic Bill of Rights (designed for colleges) be "extended to high schools as soon as possible." He cites the following:

- a three-page virulently anti-Bush handout distributed to a high school class in Bayside, NY by an English teacher
- students at a Corpus Christi, TX high school who were going to be forced to attend an Al Sharpton campaign speech before parents caused an uproar
- an Amherst, MA school board's approval of a production of *The Vagina Monologues* (a vile feminist screed featuring a lesbian relationship between an adult and an underage girl) after the board vetoed *West Side Story* and *Peter Pan* because they allegedly stereotype Puerto Ricans and American Indians. (*FrontPage Magazine.com*, 1-29-04)

A high school American studies teacher's distribution of an anti-Bush satire from a web site prompted a Michigan father to complain about classroom bias in early October. (*Detroit News*, 10-7-04)

Pro-Democrat campaign literature was mistakenly sent home with 3rd-graders in Hawthorne Elementary School in Montana in October. Officials apologized and said the information was intended for teachers, not students. (*ktvq.com*, 10-18-04)

Top 10 American Biographies

The conservative weekly *Human Events* last year asked a panel of 21 scholars to list Ten American Biographies Everyone Should Read. The list follows (11-17-03):

1. *The Education of Henry Adams* by Henry Adams (1918)
2. *Alexander Hamilton: A Biography* by Forrest McDonald (1982)
3. *Witness* by Whittaker Chambers (1952)
4. *The Life of George Washington* by John Marshall (1804-07)
5. *The Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln*

Douglas Debates by Harry Jaffa (1959)

6. *The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict* by Russell Kirk (1995)

7. *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* by Ulysses S. Grant (1885-86)

8. *R.E. Lee* by Douglas Southall Freeman (1934)

9. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* by Frederick Douglass (1845)

10. *A New Birth of Freedom: Abraham Lincoln and the Coming of the Civil War* by Harry V. Jaffa (2000)

Australian Study: Smaller Classes Don't Improve Performance

Reducing class sizes does not improve academic performance at primary or secondary school level, according to a new Australian study of 1,540 schools.

The study, conducted by the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, compared results of statewide literacy and numeracy tests with average class size. "On almost all tests, class size was rarely important," the study concluded.

As in the U.S., teachers unions have

been the strongest advocates of class-size reduction in Australia, saying the evidence in favor of smaller classes is irrefutable. But U.S. economist Eric Hanushek, speaking in Melbourne, said that several hundred American studies of the effect of class size found the evidence was inconclusive. (*theaustralian.com.au*, 8-27-04)



Fine Line (Cont. from page 1)

In a similar case, a federal district court in August sided with an Arizona family who purchased wall tiles for a school fund-raiser, bearing the message "God bless [name], We love you Mom & Dad." The Pinnacle Peak Elementary School principal refused to display the tiles, citing concerns about separation of church and state. Following the parents' victory in the trial court, the school district settled and agreed to pay some of the parents' legal fees. However, it will consider a policy prohibiting anything more than names on future murals.

Peter Sentala, an attorney for the parents, observed that religion cannot be forced by school officials on students, but parents and students can make religious statements. "Public schools are not religion-free zones," he said. (*eastvalleytribune.com*, 10-28-04)

A federal judge in October ordered the Ann Arbor, MI public school system to pay the legal fees of a student who was prevented from expressing her belief that homosexuality is wrong during her school's annual "Diversity Week." The six-figure award to the Thomas More Law Center, which brought suit on behalf of the student, followed the court's decision last December that the school had violated the Establishment Clause and her right to free speech and equal protection. (See *Education Reporter*, July 2004.)