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Presidential Candidates Make Education Promises, Proposals

Although education has taken a back seat to other issues in the 2008 presidential election, the candidates do have a few things to say on the subject. Not surprisingly, they differ from each other on several key points.

Obama's proposals

Obama has focused on the need for more and better trained teachers. "I'll recruit an army of new teachers, and pay them higher salaries, and give them more support," he said at the Democratic National Convention. "And in exchange, I'll ask for higher standards and more accountability." Last year, he promised the National Education Association (NEA) that he would spend billions of dollars on teacher recruitment and training. Obama wants to create Teacher Service Scholarships, covering four years of undergraduate or two years of graduate education, in exchange for four years of teaching in a high-need subject or location.

In his speeches to the NEA annual meeting in 2007 and 2008, Obama raised hackles by referring to his support for merit pay for teachers. Obama has since toned down his references to merit-based pay somewhat, and now refers to "innovative" ways of paying teachers, which will be designed with their input.

Like his former foe Hillary Clinton, Obama has made early childhood pro-

grams a major part of his education plan. He plans to quadruple the Early Head Start program, for children from birth to age 3. "Unlike other early childhood education plans, the Obama-Biden plan places key emphasis at early care and education for infants, which is essential for children to be ready to enter kindergarten," reads the website of the Obama campaign.

Obama promises to "provide affordable and high-quality child care to ease the burden on working families." In total, he proposes to spend an additional \$10 billion a year on preschool programs. The nation currently spends \$25 billion a year on such programs.

Greater accessibility to higher education also numbers among Obama's education proposals. He plans to create \$4,000 tax credits for college tuition. Students receiving the credit would have to complete 100 hours of community service. In 2007, Joe Biden told the NEA he believes every American should attend at least two years of college.

Obama has criticized McCain on education, saying that McCain "hasn't done one thing" for public education during his quarter-century in Congress. Obama supporters also link McCain with George W. Bush, whom they say wreaked further havoc in American education by underfunding No Child Left Behind.

McCain's Proposals

McCain stresses free-market solutions to America's education problems. "The deplorable status of preparation for our children, particularly in comparison with the rest of the industrialized world, does not allow us the luxury of eliminating options in our educational repertoire," declares the McCain campaign. "John McCain will fight for the ability of all students to have access to all schools of demonstrated excellence, including their own homes."

In addition to school choice through vouchers, McCain also supports expanding opportunities for low-income students to enroll in virtual schools online. He believes that online schooling will play an important role in expanding education options.



McCain favors merit pay for teachers, based on improving students' scores on standardized tests. Obama has been hesitant to link his support for merit pay directly to students' outcomes on academic assessments. McCain wants to recruit teachers from other fields through alternative teacher accreditation systems. On the subject of early childhood programs, McCain says he wants to continue

(See Candidates, page 4)

McCain Hits Obama's Sex Ed Bill

The presidential campaigns exchanged sharp words in September over Sen. Barack Obama's record on sex education for young children. The argument brought education into the spotlight at a time when most attention was focused on the economy.

The exchange began when Obama's campaign released a commercial charging that Sen. McCain "voted to cut education funding," is "against accountability standards," and "even proposed abolishing the Department of Education."

The McCain campaign responded quickly with an ad quoting criticisms of Obama's education record from several sources: *Education Week's* assessment that Obama "hasn't made a significant mark on education," a *Washington Post* editorial calling him "elusive" on accountability, and a *Chicago Tribune* op-ed piece naming him "a staunch defender of the existing public school monopoly."

"Obama's one accomplishment? Legislation to teach 'comprehensive sex education' to kindergartners," said the ad. This charge outraged the Obama camp, which claimed the ad misrepresented Obama's support in 2003 for Illinois Senate Bill 99. Obama spokesman Bill Burton called the ad "shameful and downright perverse," and even added, "Last week, John McCain told *Time* magazine he couldn't define what honor was. Now we know why."

The *New York Times*, *Washington*

Post, and many other media outlets sided with Obama. The *National Review's*



White House correspondent, Byron York, responded with a hard-hitting investigation of SB 99.

SB 99 proposed to update Illinois's sex

education law — according to a Planned Parenthood press release at the time, the bill would "bring Illinois into the 21st century." Obama's campaign now claims the bill was primarily an attempt to make sure children in grades K-6 would learn about inappropriate touching, as a safeguard against sexual predators. Planned Parenthood's press release, however, more accurately indicates the bill's overarching purpose, to jettison the original school code's emphasis on abstinence until marriage, in favor of what abortion provider Planned Parenthood considers "medically accurate sex education."

Perhaps most relevantly to the McCain ad, the bill stated, "each class or course in comprehensive sex education in any of grades K through 12 shall include instruction on the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including the prevention, transmission and spread of HIV." The earlier version made basically the same requirement, but limited it to grades 6 through 12, not K through 12.

York gives Obama the benefit of the doubt: Obama may have had in mind the threat of sexual predators when he decided

(See Sex Ed, page 3)

More Sex, Less Marriage on TV

Prime time television glorifies sex outside of marriage; we don't need a study to tell us that. But a new study from the Parents Television Council (PTC) exposes just how big of a problem prime time TV has become.

The study, titled "Happily Never After," focuses on prime time's obsession with extramarital sex, and its denigration of marital sex and marriage in general. "Today's prime time television programming is not merely



indifferent to the institution of marriage and the stabilizing role it plays in our society," concludes PTC. Rather, "it seems to be actively seeking to undermine marriage by consistently painting it in a negative light."

To hear the major networks tell it, sex within marriage is either a burden or nonexistent, while adultery and extramarital sex are exciting and positive experiences for the people involved. Across hundreds of hours of programming, references to nonmarital sex outnumbered references to marital sex by three to one — and by al-

most four to one during the "family hour" between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m. There were twice as many references to adultery as to married sex. When references to marital sex did crop up, they were usually negative.

A few shows take a more positive view of marriage, said PTC president Tim Winter, although those shows may not be appropriate for children, either. The drama "Friday Night

Lights" is "better than most in showing positive portrayals of marital relations and intimacy," he said. Winter also mentioned the sitcom "Everybody Hates Chris" as a rare TV-land portrayal of a strong marriage.

Of course, prime time doesn't just refer to sex verbally. It also frequently presents scenes of actual or implied sex — and when it does, it presents nonmarital sex four times as often as marital sex.

"In the 1950s and '60s it used to be

(See TV Shows, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

New Orleans initiated a \$10 million need-based voucher program for children from kindergarten to 3rd grade. Legislators hope school choice will help to renew the city, which was devastated three years ago by Hurricane Katrina. More than 600 parents appeared in person to apply for vouchers in the first three days of the application period. The program offers \$6,300 each to up to 1,500 children. (*School Reform News*, Sept. 2008)

Students at Los Angeles charter schools perform much better academically than their peers at traditional public schools, a recent study shows. New charter schools raised students' scores on California's Academic Performance Index at almost twice the rate that district-run schools did. At older, established charters, students averaged 105 points higher on the 1,000-point assessment than their peers at non-charter schools. (*School Reform News*, Sept. 2008)

Under pressure from the public, segments of the Democratic Party have rescinded their opposition to charter schools, merit pay, and even more radical school choice and accountability measures. 44% of Americans now support vouchers, which are among the more radical school reform proposals under discussion. A consensus favoring charter schools and merit pay is growing among members of both parties.

The day before the Democratic National Convention opened in Denver, Democrats open to school reform measures met for a three-hour seminar organized by the New York-based Democrats for Education Reform. Newark, NJ Mayor Cory Booker called school reform a "battle at the heart of the Democratic Party. . . . As Democrats, we have been wrong on education. It's time to get it right," he said.

(See Briefs, page 3)

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Candidates Leave 'No Child' Act Behind on the Campaign Trail

It's overdue for reauthorization, faces an impossible 2011 deadline of universal proficiency, and is the most significant feature of the federal government's involvement in education. It's the No Child Left Behind Act; and almost no one is talking about it as the November 4 election draws near. Why not?

NCLB greatly increased federal funding and federal accountability for schools when it passed with broad bipartisan support in 2001. Since then, as the law's weaknesses have come to light, NCLB has become a subject for debate between Republicans and Democrats and within each party. The law's scheduled 2007 reauthorization failed, and isn't expected to happen until after the next president takes office.

At both party conventions, candidates avoided mentioning the law by name. They have only rarely named it during other campaign stops; and when they do, they affirm that the law needs work, without detailing exactly how they plan to fix it. The law is currently unpopular and controversial in both parties. Whenever Congress does finally reauthorize it, bipartisan compromise will probably leave everybody somewhat disappointed. The candidates may be avoiding more detailed proposals because they know that those proposals aren't big winners for either party.

Republicans are divided over the federal government's involvement in education. While most believe that greater accountability can improve schools — a key NCLB tenet — they disagree over who should be holding schools accountable. Traditionally, Republicans have favored local control of schools. A sizeable contingent still believes that power over education belongs among those "reserved to the states" by the Tenth Amendment.

That contingent has spoken up more loudly over the years since NCLB's pas-

sage. In March, Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) introduced a bill that would return the power to craft their own accountability systems to the states. About 70 House Republicans are co-sponsors. A similar bill in the Senate, by Sen. Jim DeMint (R-SC), attracted seven co-sponsors.

Hoekstra, who voted against NCLB, said that many of those who voted for it "followed the president's proposals . . .

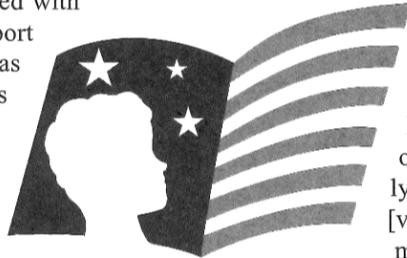
blindly, and they forgot what works." (*Education Week*, 9-10-08)

Hoekstra believes that Republicans lost control of Congress in 2006 partly because "NCLB sent [voters] a totally different message" from the traditional GOP belief in local control, especially of education. Some analysts say that no matter

who takes office in January, more Republicans in both houses are likely to join those questioning federal involvement in schools after Pres. Bush leaves office.

John McCain voted for NCLB, but has not been deeply involved in hammering out the law's particulars. Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Education Reform, said that McCain doesn't belong in either camp on NCLB; in fact, he "has his own camp." While he will support continued federal funds and accountability, Allen believes he "has a lighter touch in terms of Washington carrot and stick." (*Education Week*, 9-3-08)

Barack Obama has criticized NCLB, but does not dispute the core principle of holding schools accountable to the federal government for student achievement. Obama has identified two primary ways he would attempt to change the law if elected. He would like to change how students' academic performance is assessed, so that "our kids . . . become more than just good test takers." He has not proposed any specific ways to broaden assessments, however. Secondly, Obama pledges to "fully fund" NCLB, by spending the full amount the law makes possible, nearly \$40 billion a year.



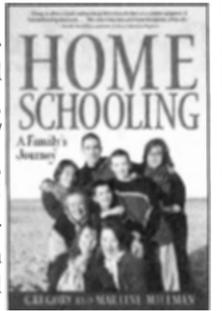
No Child LEFT BEHIND



Book of the Month



Homeschooling: A Family's Journey, Gregory and Martine Millman, Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2008, 304 pages, \$24.95



The acknowledgments section of this wonderful homeschooling

memoir thanks the unnamed bureaucrats and teachers whose lack of cooperation launched the Millman family out of conventional schools and into homeschooling. "If they had not held closed the doors, we might never have looked for a window," write the Millmans. Their decision to homeschool soon opened up a new world in which the border between life and education blurred, and then disappeared.

The authors recount taking advantage of many "teachable moments" that conventional schooling would have had to pass by. Digressions and detours lead to surprising chances to learn, grow, and make connections among subjects that schools treat as disparate categories. Travel, museums, conversations, reading Dickens at the dinner table, attending Congressional hearings, cooking, taking things apart, and engaging with other families have all played their roles in the Millman children's educations.

Gregory Millman is a financial expert, and he uses concepts from the realm of business and finance, such as value investing and disruptive innovation, to evaluate homeschooling and traditional schooling. Insights from sociology and the history of education also add much to the book.

The Millmans see education as a relationship, in which each child is respected and valued for his own sake. "The most important part of education is a close personal relationship that folds a child in arms of love and deep respect," they write. "This is a relationship in which the parent makes a perpetual self-gift." Among other things, parents can encourage their children to explore their own interests and to use their own particular gifts.

One of the Millman children waited until age eight to read. While school settings require early reading since they depend on worksheets and textbooks, homeschooled children can read when they are ready, whether early or late. Late readers' varied learning experiences before reading enrich their lives, and they read with incredible enthusiasm on their own timetable.

The book does expose some of the shortcomings of traditional schooling, but it is primarily positive: a cheerful and thankful account of 15 years of home education, and an exploration of the possibilities home education opens up. Readers will immediately find specific ideas they want to try with their own children, as well as broader principles to consider on the subjects of parenting, education, truth, and freedom.

FOCUS: Same-Sex 'Marriage' and the Persecution of Civil Society

By Jennifer Roback Morse

Advocates of same-sex "marriage" present the idea as a step forward for tolerance and respect. But recent developments place that interpretation very much in doubt.

Legalizing same-sex "marriage" is not a stand-alone policy, independent of all the other activities of the state. Once governments assert that same-sex unions are the equivalent of marriage, those governments must defend and enforce a whole host of other social changes.

Unfortunately, these government-enforced changes conflict with a wide array of ordinary liberties, including religious freedom and ordinary private property rights.

It began with the persecution of Catholic Charities in Boston. The archdiocese eventually closed down its adoption program, because the state of Massachusetts insisted that every adoption agency in the state must allow same-sex couples to adopt.

Recently, a Methodist organization in New Jersey lost part of its tax-exempt status because it refused to allow two lesbian couples to use their facility for a civil union ceremony. In Quebec, a Mennonite school was informed that it must conform to the official provincial curriculum, which includes teaching homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.

At last report, the Mennonites were considering leaving the province rather than permit the imposition of the state-sponsored curriculum on their children.

And recently, a wedding photographer in New Mexico faces a hearing with the state's Human Rights Commission because she declined the business of a lesbian couple. She didn't want to take photos of their commitment ceremony.

The underlying pattern is unmistakable. Legalizing same-sex "marriage" has brought in its wake state regulation of other parts of society. The problem is sometimes presented as an issue of religious freedom, and so, in part, it is. But the issue runs deeper than religious freedom.

McGill University professor Douglas Farrow argues in his book *Nation of Bastards* that redefining marriage allows the government to colonize all of civil society.

If same-sex couples can marry each other, they should be allowed to adopt. Anyone who says otherwise is acting against the policy of the state. If same-sex couples can have civil unions, then denying them the use of any facility they want for their ceremony amounts to unlawful discrimination. When the state says that same sex couples are equivalent to opposite-sex couples, school curriculum will inevitably have to support this claim.

Marriage between men and women is a pre-political, naturally emerging social institution. Men and women come together to create children, independently of any government. The duty of caring for those children exists even without a gov-

ernment or any political order.

Marriage protects children as well as the interests of each parent in their common project of raising those children.

Because marriage is an organic part of civil society, it is robust enough to sustain itself, with minimal assistance from the state.

By contrast, same-sex "marriage" is completely a creation of the state.

Same-sex couples cannot have children. Someone must give them

a child or at least half the genetic material to create a child. The state must detach the parental rights of the opposite-sex parent and then attach those rights to the second parent of the same-sex couple.

The state must create parentage for the same-sex couple. For the opposite-sex couple, the state merely recognizes parentage.

In her essay in *The Meaning of Marriage*, Seana Sugrue argues that the state must coddle and protect same-sex "marriage" in ways that opposite-sex marriage does not require.

Precisely because same-sex unions

are not the same as opposite-sex marriage, the state must intervene to make people believe (or at least make them act as if they believe) that the two types of unions are equivalent.

Public schools in California are soon going to be required to be "gay friendly." A doctor has been sued because she didn't want to perform an artificial insemination on a lesbian couple. A private school is in trouble for disciplining two female students for kissing. All in the name of supporting the rights of same-sex couples to "equality" with straight couples.

The fact that opposite- and same-sex couples are different in significant ways means that there will always be scope for the state to expand its reach into more and more private areas of more and more people's lives.

Perhaps some people think it is okay to shut down Catholic adoption agencies, because the Catholics have it coming to them: The Church's enemies are many. Perhaps some people don't care for Methodists, and don't care whether they lose their tax-exempt status.

But the Mennonites? These are the

most inoffensive people on the planet. They have been pacifists for centuries. Their continued existence here in North America is a testimony to the strength of our ideals of religious tolerance and pluralism, in all the best senses of those terms. But now, in the name of equality of same-sex couples, the Mennonites are being driven out of Quebec.

Perhaps you think people have a natural civil right to marry the person of their choosing. But can you really force yourself to believe that wedding photography is a civil right?

Maybe you believe that same-sex couples are entitled to have children, somehow. But is any doctor they might encounter required to inseminate them?

Advocates of same-sex "marriage" insist that theirs is a modest reform: a mere expansion of marriage to include people currently excluded. But the price of same-sex "marriage" is a reduction in tolerance for everyone else, and an expansion of the power of the state.

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Sex Ed (Continued from page 1)

to support the bill. But the plain text does say that children from kindergarten onward should learn how to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

More broadly, the bill attempted to remove the language of moral obligation, including the word "should," from the school code, along with the code's original emphasis on marriage. The original bill contained these sentences:

"Course material and instruction shall teach honor and respect for monogamous heterosexual marriage."

"Course material and instruction shall stress that pupils should abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready for marriage. . . ."

"[Classes] shall emphasize that abstinence is the expected norm in that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only protection that is 100 percent effective against unwanted teenage pregnancy [and] sexually transmitted diseases. . . ."

The new law removed these passages and replaced them with these, and others like them:

"Course material and instruction shall include a discussion of sexual abstinence as a method to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV."

"Course material and instruction shall present the latest medically factual information regarding both the possible side effects and health benefits of all forms of contraception, including the success and failure rates for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. . . ."

The older version required teachers to inculcate respect for marriage, and to stress that students "should" abstain from sex before marriage; the new version made no mention of marriage at all. Senate Bill 99 would have demoted abstinence from "the expected norm" and "the only protection that is 100% effective" to merely "a method to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections." According to this bill, abstinence is just one method among others; and teachers apparently shouldn't presume to tell students which method is best.

"There is no doubt that the bill did address the question of inappropriate touching," says Byron York. "On the other hand, there is also no doubt that, looking at the overall bill, the 'touching' provision did not have the prominence that Team Obama has suggested it had, and it certainly wasn't the bill's main purpose."

Although the *New York Times* said the McCain ad "seriously distorts the record," the text of the bill, available online for all to see, tells a different story. "The fact is," concludes York, "the bill's

intention was to mandate that issues like contraception and the prevention of sexually-transmitted diseases be included in sex-education classes for children before the sixth grade, and as early as kindergarten. Obama's defenders may howl, but the bill is what it is."

Briefs (Continued from page 2)

The Massachusetts Court of Appeals confirmed that the Lowell, MA school district must rehire three teachers it fired for failing tests in English fluency.

The teachers taught bilingual middle school math and science. Massachusetts voters approved a measure in 2002 requiring English fluency and literacy of public school teachers, and the Lowell school district fired the three teachers in 2003 when they failed oral tests in English. Lawyers defending the teachers argued that the ballot failed to define "fluency," and that the schools should have evaluated the teachers during class time instead of in separate tests. The Court of Appeals told the district to rehire the teachers and pay their back wages. (*Lowell Sun*, 9-26-08)

The National Education Association is campaigning aggressively for Barack Obama, especially in 13 battleground states.

Two million NEA members in those states will receive direct mail, email, and/or phone messages over the next month urging them to vote for Democratic candidates. (NEA press release, 9-30-08)

Florida Voters Won't Consider Vouchers After All

The Florida Supreme Court struck down ballot measures that would have expanded and protected school choice. The proposals asked voters to reconsider a clause in the state's constitution that deters Floridians from using school vouchers at religious schools. Florida has led the way in school choice with several innovative voucher programs, but school choice has also faced opposition in the courts.

It is controversial whether the constitutional clause in question should actually prevent voucher use at religious schools. Florida and 36 other states have so-called "Blaine amendments" prohibiting religious institutions from receiving any public funds. Many states added such amendments in the late 19th century, motivated by anti-Catholic prejudice.

Patricia Levesque, executive director of the school reform group Foundation for Florida's Future, said that until recently Florida's Blaine amendment applied only to services that were actually religious in nature, rather than to all services provided by religious groups. An interpretation of the amendment that prohibited state funds from going to religious groups, no matter what services the groups were providing, would jeopardize not only education, but also health care and foster care. Religious groups currently receive state funds for important services they provide in those areas.

The November ballot item would have amended the constitution to state that "individuals or entities may not be barred from participating in public programs because of their religion."

Citing the Blaine amendment, a Florida appellate court struck down a statewide voucher program in 2004 as unconstitutional. The Florida Supreme Court

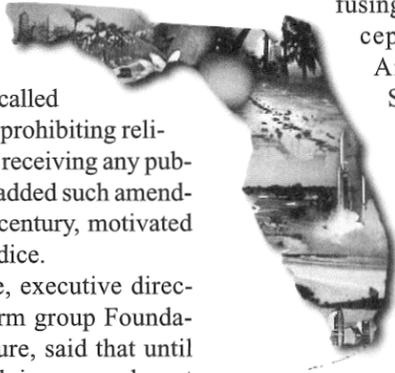
upheld that decision in 2006.

The Taxation and Budget Reform Commission agreed to put the voucher question to voters this fall, proposing two related amendments to the state constitution. The Commission linked the voucher question to a separate education proposal requiring school districts to spend at least 65% of their budget on "classroom instruction rather than on administration."

The largest Florida teachers union, an NEA affiliate, challenged the legality of the ballot language, saying it was confusing and intentionally deceptive. The ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State supported the Florida Education Association. On September 3, the state Supreme Court moved quickly, without issuing a written opinion, to strike down the school choice proposals in time for the final ballot deadline.

Voucher opponents were elated. Bill Graham, chairman of the Palm Beach County School Board, said the court's decision was "almost Christmas and Hanukkah in September."

Former Gov. Jeb Bush, who championed school choice during his time in office, called the decision "heartbreaking." He warned that even Florida's well established voucher programs for low-income and disabled students are vulnerable to similar legal attacks. "These programs, as well as 350 charter schools in our great state, will remain in limbo, under the real threat of litigation from individuals who want to centralize all education decisions within government bureaucracies," he said. (*Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 9-4-08, *School Reform News*, June 2008)



Google Case Highlights High Costs of Day Care

Internet giant Google, which employs 19,000 people, used its in-house day care facilities as a corporate recruiting perk as the company grew rapidly a few years ago. Two massive and fully equipped centers, the Kinderplex and the Woods, featured the most cutting-edge early childhood care.

At the Kinderplex, a company called Children's Creative Learning Centers provided "learning in a play-based, developmentally appropriate environment that incorporates a variety of activities and multicultural aspects in a thematic style." Google ran the Woods itself, using a trendy preschool philosophy called Reggio Emilia.

For a time, it seemed that Google's in-house day care was just another factor making Google the nation's number one "Best Company to Work For," as *Fortune Magazine* declared it in both 2007 and 2008. But then Google announced in three secretive focus-group meetings a huge price increase that left many of the parents who attended the meetings in tears.

The company planned to raise the price of infant day care from \$1,425 a



month to almost \$2,500. Toddler and preschool care, too, would rise sharply. According to *New York Times* business reporter Joe

Nocera, the average family with two children in Google day care would go, under the new plan, from paying \$33,000 a year to paying over \$57,000.

Why the steep increase in day care costs? Until now, Google has been subsidizing its day care at a rate of \$37,000 a year per child. Most other companies in Silicon Valley subsidize day care for their top employees' children at close to \$12,000 a year. Through the drastic increase in the cost to parents, Google hopes to narrow the gap between what parents pay and what this state-of-the-art day care actually costs.

In response to many complaints, Google scaled back the price increase slightly and decided to raise rates slowly over five quarters, instead of overnight. The changes nevertheless brought up many questions about employee day care, and the astronomical price of the highest quality center-based day care. (*New York Times*, 7-5-08)

Judge Criticizes Ban on Banners

For 25 years, math teacher Brad Johnson displayed four banners mentioning God in his San Diego, California classroom. The banners declared, "In God We Trust," "One Nation Under God," "God Bless America," "God Shed His Grace on Thee," and "All Men Are Created Equal, They are Endowed by their Creator." In 2007, however, officials with the Poway Unified School District ordered Johnson to remove the banners, saying they promoted a Judeo-Christian viewpoint.

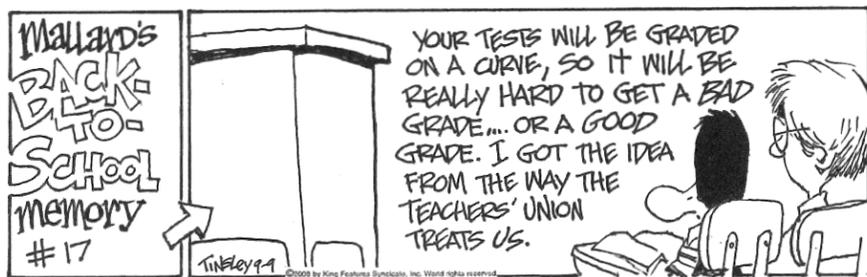
On Johnson's behalf, the Thomas More Law Center filed a lawsuit against the district, which in turn filed a motion to have the case dismissed. The district claimed that the banners were outside of Johnson's limited First Amendment rights as a public employee. In September, a federal judge dismissed the district's motion and opined that the banners are constitutionally protected free speech.

According to federal district judge Robert T. Benitez, "Whether described as

speech from a religious perspective or speech about American history and culture, through display of his classroom banners, Johnson was simply exercising his free speech rights on subjects that were otherwise permitted in the limited public forum created by Defendants and in a manner that did not cause substantial disorder in the classroom. Thus, Johnson has made out a clear claim for relief for an ongoing violation of his First Amendment free speech rights."

In arguing the case for Johnson's right to display the banners, the Thomas More Law Center pointed out that other teachers in the same district displayed Tibetan prayer flags, posters with Buddhist and Islamic messages, and other religious items and messages. Robert Muise, the lawyer representing Johnson's case, said Benitez's opinion "sends a clear message to school districts across the country that hostility toward our nation's religious heritage is contrary to our constitution." (*L.A. Times*, 9-11-08)

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



Candidates (Continued from page 1)

providing access to preschool for the neediest children. He wants to focus federal programs on the neediest children, and to provide taxpayer-funded preschool programs only in contexts in which they are proven to help children's school readiness.

McCain wants to preserve and promote local control of education funding. He thinks principals, instead of government officials at the federal or state levels, should have greater control over spending at their schools. He cites the success of many charter schools as proof that local control over funding and other

aspects of schooling produces better results than bureaucratic control.

McCain's camp criticizes Obama for what they term "tax and spend" education policies that fall short of reforming the system in meaningful ways. "Senator McCain . . . is interested in empowering families and speaking directly to the educational needs of Americans, as opposed to the system," said Eugene W. Hickok, a McCain advisor who served formerly in Pres. Bush's Department of Education. "Whereas Obama, beyond his mantra of more money, more money, is really just supporting these traditional approaches to the system."

TV Shows (Cont. from page 1)

that you would never see married couples in bed together," said Winter. "You may have noticed that when you turn the television on now you still never see married couples in bed together, but for entirely different reasons. You'll see teenagers in bed with prostitutes, men in bed with their mistresses, and teachers in bed with their students."

Winter's observation alludes to a second reality the study documented. Besides adultery and casual sex, TV shows now frequently depict or refer to aberrant sexual practices such as partner swapping, pedophilia, bestiality, prostitution, necro-

philia, and sadomasochism.

Such practices appear on screen 2.7 times as often as marital sex does — setting aside the question of whether even scenes of sex between husband and wife make good TV material. Even children and teens who seldom watch prime time TV can easily come across references to or depictions of abnormal sex, and suffer longlasting effects on how they think and feel about sex and marriage. The effects on those who watch television often — and most Americans watch it every day — are incalculable. (*www.ptc.com*, *Washington Times*, 8-11-08)