

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 316

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

MAY 2012

New Report Exposes Leftwing Professors

A new report by the California division of the National Association of Scholars (NAS) found that left-wing political activism has had a corrupting effect on the University of California (UC). The report, entitled *A Crisis of Competence*, found that left-wing political activism in the University's classrooms has caused four basic problems:

- A sharp increase in faculty members who self identify as radicals
- Curricula that violate UC regulations by promoting political activism
- Failure to study the Western tradition
- Suppression of free speech

NAS spent two years examining UC graduation requirements, reading lists, and course descriptions, and interviewing students and faculty. It determined that radi-

cal leftist politics have robbed UC students of a good education because radicalism is directly opposed to the kind of thought that should take place in academic life:

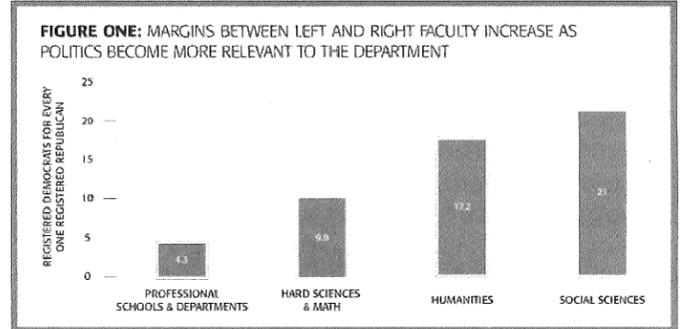
When individual faculty members and sometimes even whole departments decide that their aim is to advance social justice as they understand it rather than to teach the subject that they were hired to teach with all the analytical skill that they can muster, the quality of teaching and research is compromised. This is an inevitable result because, as we shall show, these two aims are incompatible with each other, so that the one must undermine the other.

The report cites several studies documenting academia's political imbalance. For example, a 2004 study at UC Berke-

ley found that for each Republican faculty member, the school had 8 Democratic professors. That ratio rose to 17:1 in humanities and 21:1 in social sciences. NAS noted, "The most plausible explanation for this clear and consistent pattern is surely that it is the result of discrimination in the hiring process."

The University of California's own rules prohibit the use of its facilities to advance a political ideology. The Regents' Policy on Course Content, for example, holds that "[The Regents] are responsible to see that the University remain aloof

from politics and never function as an instrument for the advance of partisan



interest." Even so, the NAS found numerous instances of inappropriate political bias in the University:

For example, instead of being content to announce the scope of the course, Berkeley's Political Science 111AC ("The Politics of Displacement") preemptively shapes a particular political interpretation: "the revolution against traditional political authority embodied in Jefferson's and Thomas Paine's attack on the British crown, the rise of slavery, and the conflict with Native America are seen as coherent parts of a cultural and social development that emerges in the 18th- and 19th-century America." The decision to focus attention exclusively on these issues (rather than, say, the debate over the constitution and the crucial first decades of the unfolding of the new political system) means that a radical political interpretation involving a hostile judgment of the U.S. is frozen into the outline of the course.

UC Berkeley political science Professor Wendy Brown disagreed with the (See *Leftwing Professors*, page 4)

Ban on Mandatory Mental Health Screening

If passed, a newly-reintroduced piece of legislation will keep federal funds from being used in mandatory or universal mental health, psychiatric, or socioemotional screening programs. The Parental Consent Act of 2011, now introduced in both Houses of Congress, H.R. 2769 by Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) and S. 1800 by Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), is designed to help protect children and families against the controversial and rapidly increasing use of mental health screenings in public schools. Such screenings, which may soon become mandatory for all children, are too often performed without parental knowledge or consent, and they frequently lead to dangerous childhood medication use. When Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX) first introduced the bill in 2009, he explained,

Already, too many children are suffering from being prescribed psychotropic drugs for nothing more than children's typical rambunctious behavior. According to Medco Health Solutions, more than 2.2 million children are receiving more than one psychotropic drug at a time. In fact, according to Medco Trends, in 2003, total spending on psychiatric drugs for children exceeded spending on antibiotics or asthma medication.

Concerned parents who object to having their children forcibly medicated may be charged with child abuse. Take Marianne Godboldo, for instance. Her 13-year-old daughter was taking Risperdol, a neuroleptic antipsychotic medication with many dangerous side effects. When Marianne noticed that the medication was making her daughter's condition worse, she decided to take advantage of alternate treatment options. Child Protective Services (CPS) charged Marianne with medical neglect. They took custody of her daughter after a 12-hour stand-off in which CPS enlisted the help of a police

SWAT team. Congressman Paul argues that such cases will become more com-



Rep. Ron Paul, M.D.



Sen. Rand Paul, M.D.

mon if tax dollars are used to fund universal mental health screenings in schools:

Many children have suffered harmful side effects from using psychotropic drugs. Some of the possible side effects include mania, violence, dependence and weight gain. Yet, parents are already being threatened with child abuse charges if they resist efforts to drug their children. Imagine how much easier it will be to drug children against their parents' wishes if a federally-funded mental-health screener makes the recommendation.

(See *Mental Health Screening*, page 4)

Middle-Schoolers Drafted Into Obama Campaign

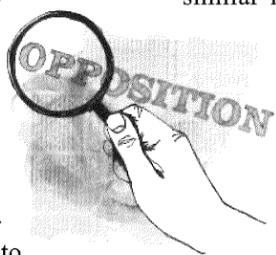
Middle-school students in Virginia became unwitting tools of the Obama campaign when their teacher required them to conduct opposition research in class against Republican presidential candidates. 8th graders at Liberty Middle School in Fairfax County were told to research Republican presidential hopefuls, find the "weaknesses" of each, prepare a strategy paper to exploit those weaknesses, and then locate an individual inside the Obama campaign to whom they could send their suggestions.

Many parents were upset by the assignment, which was announced in teacher Michael Denman's Civics Honor's class in mid-January. "This assignment was just creepy beyond belief — like something out of East Germany during the Cold War," a father told *The Daily Caller*. One student added, "My classmates don't actually know a lot, but

a few of us tended to agree that the most recent instruction on this project just didn't seem right. Mr. Denman didn't tell us where to find the information, just to research on them."

There was no attempt to perform similar research on Democratic party candidates, and no students were asked to research President Obama's history.

Fairfax County Public School spokesman John Torre said that students were never actually instructed to send their findings to the Obama campaign. Instead, he told *The Daily Caller*, "the teacher simply asked his students to find out the name of the office that would receive such information." Mr. Denman was not reprimanded, but was "advised . . . that he should emphasize to his students that this assignment was meant to learn a process and not to endorse a particular candidate." Denman agreed to give students the chance to re-



search candidates of either political party if he assigns similar homework again.

Denman's class assignment violated district policy, which states that "employees shall not involve their schools in political campaigns, distribute political literature on school property or attempt to indoctrinate students with their personal political beliefs."

The Rutherford Institute's John Whitehead said of the incident,

I think before schools even get into this area, they should get parents' permission to be talking about politics or attacking a particular politician. So [it's] not a good area, not a good idea. Again, the idea of schools is to educate, not indoctrinate . . . If a teacher says a particular candidate is a bad guy, not a good guy, and the other guy is a good man, or whatever they get into, kids are going to believe their authority figure. It's not a good idea. That's why teachers need to present all points of view on politics if you're going to get into that area.

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Michigan taxpayers may soon be forced to pay for even more underqualified and undercommitted students to attend college. Michigan Democrats have proposed a plan that would offer free tuition at Michigan state universities to every student who attended Michigan public schools every year from Kindergarten through high school. If passed, the plan would cost an estimated \$1.7 billion per year and would mostly benefit the middle and upper class students whose votes the Democrats have long courted.

An anonymous atheist family is suing a Massachusetts school district for using the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. The family, which has three children in the Acton-Boxwell Regional School District, argues that the Pledge violates the Massachusetts Constitution's Equal Rights Amendment. State law requires that the Pledge be recited every morning at school, though district officials were quick to point out that students' participation is strictly voluntary. The use of the phrase "under God" has been challenged in Federal courts before, but this is the first time the challenge has been based on state law.

California children as young as 12 are being encouraged to use a state program that provides free condoms by mail. Students who sign up at Teensource.org receive a package of ten condoms, lubricant, and sex-ed literature in the mail. The items come in a plain yellow envelope so that parents need not know about their arrival. Teensource.org also features tips on how teens can access birth control, abortion services, pregnancy testing, mental health services, prenatal care, and testing and treatment for STDs "without anyone else finding out."

One New Jersey School has been declared "a no hugging school." Matawan-Aberdeen Middle School Principal Tyler Blackmore issued the hugging ban in response to some "incidents of unsuitable, physical interactions," MSNBC reported. "It makes our school look bad, and it makes our school look like we do more than hug, but we do not," complained one student.

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax (314) 721-3373. Editor: Rachel Motte. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>
E-mail: education@eagleforum.org

Democrats Devitalize No Child Left Behind Revisions

Nearly everyone agrees that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) needs to be revised, and both Republican and Democrat lawmakers are scrambling to rework the faulty legislation. If proposed Democratic changes to an in-progress Republican update bill are approved, the resulting mash up could result in a version of NCLB that modifies the policy without actually improving it.

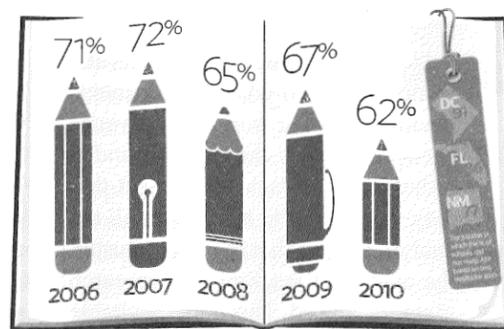
H.R. 3989, the Student Success Act (SSA), would rewrite Title I of NCLB. Representative John Kline (R-MN), chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, introduced the bill in January in an attempt "to shrink federal intrusion in the classrooms and return responsibility for student success to states and school districts." If passed, the SSA would:

1. Restore state authority for establishing performance ratings
2. Eliminate "adequate yearly progress"; states must develop their own accountability systems
3. Eliminate federal intervention into science assessments
4. Streamline parents' access to information about school performance
5. Eliminate the "Highly Qualified Teacher" mandate
6. Empower states to design school

improvement strategies

7. End the School Improvement Grant program, thus limiting federal intervention into underperforming schools
8. Provide more funding flexibility

National percentage of schools that have made Adequate Yearly Progress



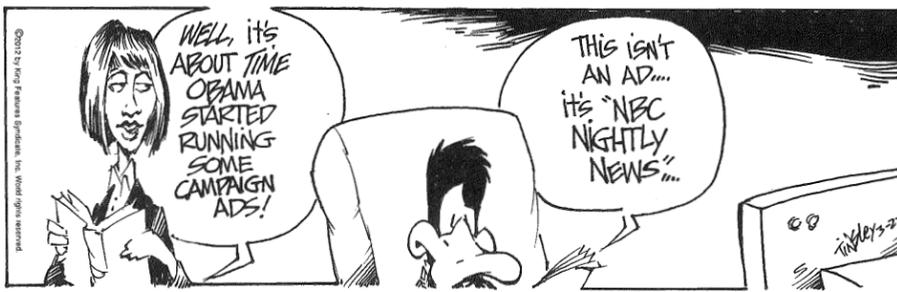
Center on Education Policy • U.S. Report AYP April 2011

Heritage Foundation Education Policy Analyst Lindsey Burke called the SSA "a good first step in replacing the wrongly directed accountability of No Child Left Behind with transparency about school results to parents and taxpayers."

Congressman George Miller (D-CA), ranking Democratic member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, called the proposed bill "radical" and "highly partisan" and complained that it would "turn the clock back decades on equity and accountability." Several dozen

(See *No Child Left Behind*, page 4)

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Missouri Teachers Caught Helping Students Cheat

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education received more than 100 reports of standardized testing problems, including teachers who encouraged cheating, in 2010 and 2011 — but the department has no plans to use the tools already at its disposal to root out further test fraud.

Bob Schaeffer, public education director for FairTest: National Center for Fair and Open Testing, told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "If you don't look, you don't find. You are void of embarrassment by not asking tough questions." It looks like Missouri education officials agree. Though the state has ready access to effective tools that would help detect testing abuses, it relies on an unreliable self-reporting system, in which school

districts must contact the state when abuses are discovered. And although No Child Left Behind requires states to perform accountability checks to ensure fair testing, Missouri dismantled its accountability program in 2010, citing budget concerns.

It's likely that teacher-sponsored cheating is more widespread than Missouri's self-reporting system indicates. Reported incidents include one fifth-grade class in which students were called out of class to redo parts of a science test, three teachers who violated state policy when they looked through a fourth-grade test and created a study guide for student use, and a student who started a make-up math test only to find the answers already filled in for him.

(See *Students Cheat*, page 4)

Book of the Month



The Essential American: A Patriot's Resource, Edited by Jackie Gingrich Cushman. Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2010, 369 pp.

When the Massachusetts Delegates to the Continental Congress decreed in the Northwest Ordinance that "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall for ever be encouraged," they could not have predicted the extent to which a future public school system would ignore those very ideals. Today's public schools can no longer be counted on to teach the ideas that have made the United States a great nation. When students do learn about America's history, they are often taught a highly editorialized version in which traditional American ideals fall prey to a liberal agenda. Students need a solid grounding in the primary source documents that helped shape our nation's history if they are to be inoculated against the sort of historical revisionism that frequently takes place in public high schools and universities.

The Essential American is an excellent resource for anyone seeking to better understand our nation's founding and history. Edited by Jackie Gingrich Cushman, and with a forward by Newt Gingrich, the book contains 25 of the most important documents and speeches in America's history. The included works range from Patrick Henry's address at the second Virginia Convention in 1775, to Captain Mosley Baker's "Remember the Alamo" speech at San Jacinto in 1836, to George W. Bush's Congressional Address following the terrorist attacks of September 11. The book offers a good general overview of some of the most important moments in America's history as seen through the eyes of those who lived through them.

Each document or speech is introduced with a brief essay placing the piece in its historical context. Editorial comments are fairly minimal, allowing each work to stand on its own. Some of the included documents, like the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, were obvious choices for such an anthology and need little introduction. Others, like General Douglas MacArthur's Sylvanus Thayer Award Acceptance Address of 1962 or Jeane Kirkpatrick's 1984 speech to the Republican National Convention, offer a look at some less well-known but important speeches.

Mrs. Cushman encourages readers to further delve into the United States' wealth of historical documents by including a timeline of significant events in American history and a computer-ready DVD featuring over a thousand additional documents not included in the book.

Findings from the 'Parental Consent Act of 2011'

Excerpts from: A Bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds for any universal or mandatory mental health screening program. Introduced in the U.S. Senate (S. 1800) and U.S. House (H.R. 2769)

The Congress finds as follows:

- 1) The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) issued findings and recommendations against screening for suicide that corroborate those of the Canadian Preventive Services Task Force, 'USPSTF found no evidence that screening for suicide risk reduces suicide attempts or mortality. There is limited evidence on the accuracy of screening tools to identify suicide risk in the primary care setting, including tools to identify those at high risk.'
- 2) The 1999 Surgeon General's report on mental health admitted the serious conflicts in the medical literature regarding the definitions of mental health and mental illness when it said, 'In other words, what it means to be mentally healthy is subject to many different interpretations that are rooted in value judgments that may vary across cultures. The challenge of defining mental health has stalled the development of programs to foster mental health (Secker, 1998). . . .'
- 3) A 2005 report by the National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy admitted, with respect to the psychiatric screening of children from birth to age 5, the following: 'We have mentioned a number of the problems for the new field of IMH [Infant Mental Health] throughout this paper, and many of them complicate examining outcomes.' Briefly, such problems include:
 - A) Lack of baseline.
 - B) Lack of agreement about diagnosis.
 - C) Criteria for referrals or acceptance into services are not always well defined.
 - D) Lack of longitudinal outcome studies.
 - E) Appropriate assessment and treatment requires multiple informants involved with the young child: parents, clinicians, child care staff, preschool staff, medical personnel, and other service providers.
 - F) Broad parameters for determining socioemotional outcomes are not clearly defined, although much attention is now being given to school readiness.
- 4) Authors of the bible of psychiatric diagnosis, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, admit that the diagnostic criteria for mental illness are vague, saying, 'DSM-IV criteria remain a consensus without clear empirical data supporting the number of items required for the diagnosis. . . . Furthermore, the behavioral characteristics specified in DSM-IV, despite efforts to standardize them, remain subjective. . . .' (American Psychiatric Association Committee on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-IV 1994), pp. 1162-1163).

- 5) Because of the subjectivity of psychiatric diagnosis, it is all too easy for a psychiatrist to label a person's disagreement with the psychiatrist's political beliefs a mental disorder.
- 6) Efforts are underway to add a diagnosis of 'extreme intolerance' to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Prisoners in the California State penal system judged to have this extreme intolerance based on race or sexual orientation are considered to be delusional and are being medicated with anti-psychotic drugs (*Washington Post* 12/10/05).
- 7) At least one federally funded school violence prevention program has suggested that a child who shares his or her parent's traditional values may be likely to instigate school violence.
- 8) Despite many statements in the popular press and by groups promoting the psychiatric labeling and medication of children, that ADD/ADHD is due to a chemical imbalance in the brain, the 1998 National Institutes of Health Consensus Conference said, '. . . further research is necessary to firmly establish ADHD as a brain disorder. This is not unique to ADHD, but applies as well to most psychiatric disorders, including disabling diseases such as schizophrenia. . . . Although an independent diagnostic test for ADHD does not exist. . . . Finally, after years of clinical research and experience with ADHD, our knowledge about the cause or causes of ADHD remains speculative.'
- 9) There has been a precipitous increase in the prescription rates of psychiatric drugs in children:
 - A) The use of antipsychotic medication in children has increased nearly fivefold between 1995 and 2002 with more than 2.5 million children receiving these medications, the youngest being 18 months old (*Vanderbilt University*, 2006).
 - B) More than 2.2 million children are receiving more than one psychotropic drug at one time with no scientific evidence of safety or effectiveness (*Medco Health Solutions*, 2006).
 - C) More money was spent on psychiatric drugs for children than on antibiotics or asthma medication in 2003 (*Medco Trends*, 2004).
- 10) A September 2004 Food and Drug Administration hearing found that more than two-thirds of studies of antidepressants given to depressed children showed that they were no more effective than placebo, or sugar pills, and that only the positive trials were published by the pharmaceutical industry. The lack of effectiveness of antidepressants has been known by the Food and Drug Administration since at least 2000 when, according to the Food and Drug Administration *Background Comments on Pediatric Depression*, Robert Temple of the Food and Drug Administration Office of Drug Evaluation acknowledged the 'preponderance of negative studies of antidepressants in pediatric populations'. The Surgeon General's report said of stimulant medication like Ritalin, 'However, psychostimulants do not appear to achieve long-term changes in outcomes such as

peer relationships, social or academic skills, or school achievement.'

- 11) The Food and Drug Administration finally acknowledged by issuing its most severe Black Box Warnings in September 2004, that the newer antidepressants are related to suicidal thoughts and actions in children and that this data was hidden for years. A confirmatory review of that data published in 2006 by Columbia University's department of psychiatry, which is also the originator of the TeenScreen instrument, found that 'in children and adolescents (aged 6-18 years), antidepressant drug treatment was significantly associated with suicide attempts . . . and suicide deaths. . . .'. The Food and Drug Administration had over 2,000 reports of completed suicides from 1987 to 1995 for the drug Prozac alone, which by the agency's own calculations represent but a fraction of the suicides. Prozac is the only such drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in children.
- 12) Other possible side effects of psychiatric medication used in children include mania, violence, dependence, weight gain, and insomnia from the newer antidepressants; cardiac toxicity including lethal arrhythmias from the older antidepressants; growth suppression, psychosis, and violence from stimulants; and diabetes from the newer anti-psychotic medications.
- 13) Parents are already being coerced to put their children on psychiatric medications and some children are dying because of it. Universal or mandatory mental health screening and the accompanying treatments recommended by the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health will only increase that problem. Across the country, Patricia Weathers, the Carroll Family, the Johnston Family, and the Salazar Family were all charged or threatened with child abuse charges for refusing or taking their children off of psychiatric medications.
- 14) The United States Supreme Court in *Pierce versus Society of Sisters* (268 U.S. 510 (1925)) held that parents have a right to direct the education and upbringing of their children.
- 15) Universal or mandatory mental health screening violates the right of parents to direct and control the upbringing of their children.
- 16) Federal funds should never be used to support programs that could lead to the increased over-medication of children, the stigmatization of children and adults as mentally disturbed based on their political or other beliefs, or the violation of the liberty and privacy of Americans by subjecting them to invasive 'mental health screening' (the results of which are placed in medical records which are available to government officials and special interests without the patient's consent).



Leftwing Professors *(Continued from page 1)*

study's findings. Brown argued that the imbalance exists because conservatives don't often go to grad school to study political science. "If the argument is that what is going on is some kind of systematic exclusion," she told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, then critics need to look more carefully at "where the discouragement happens." But the NAS report demonstrated that "This hiring pattern has occurred just as the quality of a college education has sharply declined." And as *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Debra Saunders pointed out,

In pushing protests, faculty essentially have assured students that they already know enough to occupy Sacramento. Only a third of them can read and explain complex material, but students already know better than lawmakers and voters how best to pay for education. Why study? The proof is in academia's acceptance of this imbalance.

The report urges University leaders to "proclaim that the campus ought to be a rigorous marketplace of ideas, and that this essential idea is betrayed when the campus becomes a sanctuary for a narrow ideological segment of the spectrum of political and social ideas." Robert Anderson, a UC Berkeley economics and math professor, said the report

is short on facts, but long on innuendo and anecdotes. The University of California offers tens of thousands of courses each year, the vast majority of which are excellent. A few dozen anecdotes about courses that allegedly have significant flaws does not diminish that fact, much less support the report's sweeping claims.

The report's authors anticipated this critique, and answered it carefully:

If even ten percent of classrooms are corrupted, that would be horrendous, and yet the word "most" would allow far more than that. The deepest problem of this defense, however, is that it implicitly concedes that the campus mechanisms that used to protect against corruption of the classroom have long since broken down.

If those mechanisms were still work-

ing, the occasional abuse would be dealt with as soon as it became known. This is what happened, say, forty years ago. At that time, nobody would have said that "most" classrooms are not politicized. Instead, it might have been said that an occasional case occurs, but that it is soon corrected. The difference between these two statements is enormous. The first admits that there may be a good deal of this objectionable practice about, but not so much that we should be concerned to any great extent. That implies that there is no need to do anything — we need not correct the abuses. But this flies in the face of all that we know about human affairs. Abuses that go uncorrected will proliferate, because it is precisely the act of correcting them that tells everyone that they are abuses. The position formerly held by deans was that if a single case were allowed to go uncorrected, the rule would no longer exist, and abuses would become common. That is the position we are in today. And so this defense implicitly admits that administrators have lost control of the situation and now tolerate politicization — it simply hopes that there is not too much of it. This is a halfhearted and incoherent attitude, one that ducks the question whether an important principle needs protecting.

The NAS argues that UC administrators have failed in their responsibility to ensure that all students have access to a quality education, opting instead to use the school to promote their own political agendas:

far from performing their role as the university's quality control mechanism, (they) now routinely function as the enablers, protectors, and even apologists for the politicized university and its degraded scholarly and educational standards.

It would be bad enough if these abuses were unique to the University of California, but NAS cites numerous studies proving that California is just part of a much larger trend. *A Crisis of Competence* is a must-read for anyone concerned about the continual decline of higher education.

No Child Left Behind *(Continued from page 2)*

advocacy groups for minority, special education, and disabled students agreed. 41 such groups signed a February 16 letter to Rep. Kline from the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights which stated that "The bill would thrust us back to an earlier time when states could choose to ignore disparities between children of color, low-income students, ELLs, and students with disabilities."

Congressman Miller proposed a Democratic amendment to the SSA which has a number of problematic provisions. Miller's amendment would, for instance,

- Require "all" students to reach college and career readiness
- Measure student improvement and graduation rates along with the already required proficiency rates

- Potentially subject many more schools to federal interventions
- Closely regulate the way state accountability systems include disabled students
- Require states to translate examinations for every language group of 10,000 students or more, placing a huge financial burden on some of the larger states
- Require that states and districts redistribute "effective" teachers from middle-class to poor schools

These and other proposed Democratic revisions significantly weaken the SSA's attempts to reestablish state authority and result in a new version of NCLB that would have very few advantages over the current program.

Mental Health Screening *(Continued from page 1)*

This is not idle speculation. Former President George W. Bush's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health has already recommended a comprehensive system of screenings for all Americans, beginning in public schools. Numerous public schools already screen students for mental illnesses, and many more are doing so every year.

There are serious problems with this approach. For example, one popular program called TeenScreen checks for social phobia, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues using vague questions like these:

1. Has there been a time when you felt you couldn't do anything well or that you weren't as good-looking or smart as other people?
2. Have you often felt very nervous or uncomfortable when you have been with a group of children or young people, like in the lunchroom at school, or at a party?
3. In the last year, has there been any situation when you had less energy than usual?

Nearly every normal high-schooler would have to answer the above questions with an affirmative — but that's no indication of mental health difficulties.

Even TeenScreen's creator, David Shaffer of Columbia University, admitted in a 2004 article that his widely-used test had problems. The test, he said, "would result in 84 nonsuicidal teens being referred for further evaluation for every 16 youths correctly identified." Still, he continued, "many of these so-called false-positive cases may be experiencing painful depression symptoms . . . and are likely to benefit from treatment."

Mental health screenings are frequently performed by the very companies which stand to benefit most from childhood medication use. Allen Jones, former investigator with the Pennsylvania Office of the Inspector General, argues that such companies are trying to make money, not help children. "TeenScreen was developed and promoted by persons with deep financial ties to makers of psychiatric drugs," he said. A look at TeenScreen's staff roster proves his point: founder David Shaffer has served as a paid consultant

for Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline, and other psychiatric drug manufacturers. TeenScreen Director Laurie Flynn was previously the director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which receives most of its funding from drug companies, and advisory board member Michael Hogan worked

for at least two companies that were heavily funded by drug companies. Indeed, TeenScreen admits that one of its priorities is to "connect" kids with mental health treatment. That very often means prescribing psychotropic drugs, though such drugs come with severe side effects and have not been found safe for childhood use. In September 2004 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) revealed that more than two-thirds of the studies done on antidepressant use in children found that prescription drugs were no more effective than placebos. Positive trials were published only by the pharmaceutical industry.

Universal mental health screenings would be problematic in other ways, too. Though such screenings are advertised as a way to prevent teen suicide, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force found "no evidence" that they are effective in reducing either suicide attempts or deaths. And while the schools that currently screen for mental health problems claimed to do so only with parental consent, many require only "passive" consent. If parents don't sign a form explicitly stating that their child cannot take part in the program, consent is assumed. Others urge children to participate by offering movie passes or pizza parties.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights International reported last fall that one federally funded violence prevention program already lists "intolerance" as a mental problem. Additionally, there are efforts underway to add "extreme intolerance" to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual used to determine mental health diagnosis criteria. Congressman Paul has said of this, "Because 'intolerance' is often a code word for believing in traditional values, children who share their parents' values could be labeled as having mental problems and a risk of causing violence." His Parental Consent Act is an attempt to combat this dangerous trend.



Students Cheat *(Continued from page 2)*

Some districts report that an atmosphere of intimidation means many problems probably go unreported. At Herzog Elementary School, three teachers were referred to as "devils" after they reported several abuses to Superintendent Kelvin Adams. School staff also protested the report by wearing the same color in solidarity against the teachers.



Missouri spends \$8.4 million annually on its state assessment program, which was developed about 20 years ago to help the Missouri Board of Education measure student progress and accredit school districts. It's estimated that the department would only need to spend \$20,000-\$50,000 a year to proactively root out cheating with effective statistical analyses, but officials say the cost is too high.