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Islamic Indoctrination in Social Studies Class?

Some parents at Spring Hill Middle School in Tennessee were incensed when their children had to write “Allah is the only God.” The parent of a seventh grader says, “They have studied Islam for three weeks, but skipped the whole chapter on Christianity because it’s not in the state standards.”

Students at Wilson County schools in Tennessee were scheduled to take a test on Islamic curriculum on September 11, 2015. A district spokesperson stated in a Facebook post that the timing of that testing was not deliberate. But it seemed at best calculated to some parents who demanded the test date be changed.

There have been a series of complaints about the teaching of Islam and what some call Muslim religious indoctrination occurring in states. Students in K-12 are being assigned lessons that seem beyond what’s appropriate to educate students about Islam and more intended to sway them to a belief in the religion.

Parents objected when Walton County, Georgia middle school students were taught that “Allah is the same God worshipped by Jews and Christians.” One Walton County parent says, “My daughter had to learn the [Shahadah],”

which is part of the five pillars of Islam that comprises “what you learn to convert.” The parent said students “never once learned anything about the Ten Commandments” or Christianity.

The complaints are so serious in Tennessee that the State Board of Education is undertaking a review of the social studies standards two years early. (The review is normally done every six years.)

Local schools told parents who complained about the assignments that the controversial curriculum being taught to students is required by Tennessee state law. But state education leaders deny that claim. The state says the responsibility for curriculum choice belongs to

(See *Indoctrination*, page 4)

5 PILLARS OF ISLAM	
	SHAHADAH <small>Word of testimony that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger</small>
	SALAH <small>Offering Salah (prayer) five times a day</small>
	ZAKAT <small>Paying the Zakat (giving alms or charity)</small>
	HAJJ <small>Going to pilgrimage to the House of Allah at Mecca</small>
	FASTING <small>Fasting in the month of the Ramadan</small>

Colorado Drug Culture Harms Students

In September, Denver police cited seven pot shops for selling to those under age 21. The *Denver Post* called the citations “a blow to recreational marijuana in Colorado.” Colorado’s director of the Marijuana Enforcement Division says, “This represents a downward trend in compliance that is concerning.”

A report from the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA) indicates legalization of marijuana in Colorado has had many ill effects on students. Colorado citizens voted to legalize marijuana in the state in 2012.

According to a recent *Atlantic* magazine article:

In Colorado, the public-education benefit of legalization served as a major selling point for the proposal during election season. Pro-legalization advocates even aired ads with slogans like, ‘Jobs for our people. Money for our schools. Who could ask for more?’ and ‘Strict Regulation. Fund Education.’” (5-4-15)

But recreational marijuana use has become the greatest challenge to education in Colorado, where children as young as 6th grade reportedly show up stoned at school. Research shows that “using education to justify the legaliza-

tion of formerly condemned activities often serves as a selling point in name only.”

The RMHIDTA report states that by the year following legalization, 11% of Colorado’s 12-17 year-olds were considered pot users — compared to 7% nationwide. There has also been a 40% increase in drug-related school suspensions and expulsions, most of which are “marijuana violations.” Marijuana-related traffic fatalities doubled since 2009, to 94 in 2014. “In 2014, when retail marijuana businesses began operating, there was a 38% increase in the number of marijuana-related hospitalizations in only one year.”

The RMHIDTA study was completed by “two intelligence analysts, relying on information from more than 30 entities, including federal, state, and local agencies, as well as health care facilities.” It is titled, “The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact” and was created in affiliation with the President’s Office of National Drug Control Policy. It calls the time period between 2013 to the present the “recreational marijuana era.”

Parents say not only is it harmful that marijuana is legal in the state but

(See *Drug Culture*, page 4)

Nothing New Under Dem Sun

During the first Democratic debate, presidential candidates showed that they believe “the era of big government is back.” They didn’t even pretend they aren’t in favor of growing federal power. They would support more government interference in American’s lives, including in the education of children.

Little was directly mentioned about education in the only debate the Democratic presidential candidates have had so far. The candidates “defined themselves as enemies of Big Coal, the NRA, health insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, Wall Street, billionaires, and Republicans.” (TheFederalist.com, 10-19-15)

Asked to describe enemies she was most proud of, Hillary Clinton named several, including the “Republicans.” It’s telling that she didn’t say the Republican Party, but “Republicans.” Democrats seem unable to understand that Republicans are the opposition, not the enemy. Clinton as president would certainly wage war on the rights of American parents to choose the direction of their own children’s education.

Both Clinton and Bernie Sanders tout programs to make college free for students. They believe that taxpayers should pay for everyone’s children to attend college. Clinton and Sanders also want to offer in-state tuition rates to illegal immigrant students, a goal candidate and former governor Martin O’Malley already achieved in his home state.

Bernie Sanders claims, “A college degree today is the equivalent of what a high school degree was fifty years ago,” and that’s why he wants to provide it free. If his statement comes close to being true, it’s because liberal education policies strip factual learning from schools in favor of teaching students fluff.

Hillary Clinton wants students to work ten hours a week to cover their tuition. Even at a relatively inexpensive in-state school, tuition amounts to over \$10,000 a year that taxpayers would fund. Democrats want to add entitlements instead of getting rid of those that are already drowning the nation in debt.

Clinton also suggests that college loans should be refinanced or completely forgiven if they cause “hardship” on graduates. This would encourage more irresponsible tuition spending by students who could choose to attend more affordable colleges. Learning fiscal responsibility should be part of K-12 education. (Maybe this should also be studied by Democratic presidential candidates.)

“As a young student in Nevada said to me, the hardest thing about going to college should not be paying for it,” Clinton said. But higher education is still a privilege, not a right or an entitlement. How to pay for it should remain a crucial part of students’ decision-making process.

Clinton suggested that the only way a student could “live up to his or her God-given potential” is by attending government-provided, taxpayer-funded preschool. There’s no proof that academic preschool helps students succeed in school but Clinton doesn’t care. Taxing all citizens to pay for preschool-for-all doesn’t bother her or her supporters.

Former U.S. Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia offered a sensible comment, saying he’s not in favor of affirmative action that considers race alone because it leaves underprivileged white people behind. Then he dropped out of the Democratic primary race. (*Education Week*, 10-21-15)



Unions Choose Hillary

In a controversial move, the National Education Association executive board voted to support Hillary Clinton as their candidate, although internal polling shows many NEA members support Bernie Sanders. There was no chance the union would support a Republican.

Although only 75% of the board was convinced to vote for Hillary, union leadership believes she will be the candidate and wants to align with her early in order to be in line for favors should she become president. “When the union sat out the divisive 2008 Democratic primary between Clinton and then-Sen. Barack Obama, many members felt they had lost an opportunity to influence the race and the policies of the eventual winner,” according to Politico. (10-3-15)

The American Federation of Teachers voted to support Clinton in July. The teachers union endorsements unleash millions of dollars and man-hours that will support the Clinton campaign.

Hillary Clinton shares most of the current administration’s views on education and supports intrusive federal intervention and one-size-fits all schemes. (See *Education Reporter* Focus article, “Hillary Clinton Found at the Rotten Center of the Common Core Standards,” May 2015)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

In a plea agreement that would lessen her jail time to about seven years, Barbara Byrd-Bennett admitted to accepting bribes and kickbacks from her former employer, an education consulting firm, while she was chief of Chicago Public Schools. Mayor Rahm Emanuel's appointee took money and gifts in return for granting more than \$23 million in school district employee training contracts without going through a bidding process. (*Wall Street Journal*, 10-3-15)

The day after meeting President Obama at the White House, Ahmed Mohamed announced he and his family are moving from Texas to Qatar, an Islamic country on the Persian Gulf where he'll get perks, including education scholarships. The Muslim-American boy, who was briefly detained by police for having a disassembled clock resembling a suitcase bomb at school, met in October with Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, known as the "Butcher of Darfur," who is accused of genocide and atrocities with as many as 2.6 million victims.

After interviewing 150 people, police found no evidence that a non-student was kicked out of a fraternity party at the University of North Dakota "because he is gay." Police determined that "the man who claimed he was the victim of a hate crime" instigated the fight. Although police investigators recommended charging him with providing false information concerning the altercation, the prosecutor won't file charges. The fraternity was allowed "limited operation" during the investigation. (ABC, 10-8-15)

In October, University of Detroit Jesuit High School students served as pall bearers at the funerals of three homeless veterans without families. One student said, "The men we honored today put their lives on the line for our country and now they deserve our dignity and service in return." St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland participates in a similar program to honor veterans. (Breitbart.com, 10-27-15)

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Contorted Common Core Polls

It's not surprising that teachers, parents, and citizens are confused about Common Core standards. Campaigns that offer biased claims or slanted information have been sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the copyright owners of the Common Core standards, by Pearson Education, the Gates Foundation, and even Chambers of Commerce. Some of the biased information comes in the form of polls.

There's an old saying that statistics can be manipulated to provide evidence for whatever side of an issue one wants to prove. Polls fall in the same category, offering statistics that are influenced by the way questions are asked.

A recent *Education Next* poll found that 49% of Americans support Common Core standards, while in the same timeframe a PDK/Gallup poll found that only

24% support Common Core. Obviously one or both of these these polls must be wrong.

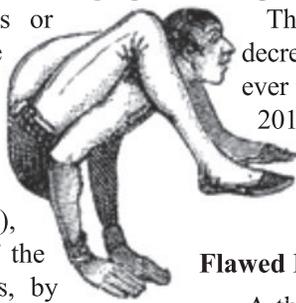
The *Education Next* poll has shown decreased support for Common Core ever since 2012. Between 2014 and 2015, those who oppose the standards increased by 9 percentage points from 26% to 35% who are now against the standards.

Flawed Poll Questions

A third poll gives insight into how there can be such discrepancies and major errors that occur when an effort is made to gauge what people believe. While media outlets portrayed the storyline that "the public remains confused about the Common Core" and decried "disinformation" as the culprit, the poll itself was flawed.

On September 8, 2015, the *Hechinger Report* ran an article titled, "Think you know a lot about Common Core? A new poll finds you're probably

(See *Common Core*, page 4)



MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Union Case to Watch

The Supreme Court will rule on *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, a case brought by ten California teachers who are forced to pay union dues, which they say results in a violation of their right to free speech and to free association. The teachers want to decide for themselves whether to pay dues to the union, an organization that always supports Democrats and liberal policy positions.

Public school teachers in California who decline to join the union must still pay what is called an "agency fee" to the union. This fee is allegedly charged because teachers receive a benefit when the union negotiates contracts with schools. If specifically requested, a portion of the dues these non-union teachers pay is refunded. The refund supposedly represents any part that is unrelated to collective bargaining. But teachers are concerned that their money may be spent on lobbying and other efforts to elect people they wouldn't support, which they say is the way their free speech is violated.

The court's decision could end compulsory union membership dues nationwide. The Center for Individual Rights is representing the teachers.

Wisconsin's Act 10 already eliminated agency fees in that state. The result of teachers being allowed to decline membership and the payment of agency fees has resulted in a 50% drop in union membership. When teachers aren't forced to

pay union dues, many choose not to.

The upcoming *Friedrichs* case involves a 1977 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*. In *Abood*, the court held that no one can be forced to join a public sector union or to contribute to the "union's political speech and activities."

But California and twenty other states' teachers unions still collect dues from nonmembers. In California, a typical teacher pays about \$1,000 in annual dues and, if requested, will be reimbursed about \$350. That is the amount union accountants claim is "nonchargeable," or the amount of dues used for "political speech" purposes.

The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers unions are well aware that mandatory agency fees mean more teachers join their organizations.

Accounting for what is and is not "political use" of dues is complicated. An example is the union's annual convention, where Political Action Committee (PAC) money is collected from contributing members. Although non-union teachers who pay "agency fees" to the union don't contribute to the PAC, their dues do support the convention where the PAC money is collected.

(See *Union Case*, page 4)

Book of the Month



Self-Evident Truths: Foundations of American Political Thought, Bill Burtness, Xulon Press, 2012, \$15.99

Self-Evident Truths is an excellent

civics or history textbook for students (it even has study questions at the end of each chapter) or a refresher course for anyone seeking the truth about American government. It also provides insight into ways to make our schools an incubator of outstanding citizens.

The author explains that the Founding Fathers were influenced by the Bible. This book shows "how Biblical principles were implemented as the moral and then structural basis of society," and even offers correlating Bible verses.

The Founders devised a new form of government that works when those who are governed are educated and self-controlled.

There is a vast difference between freedom and liberty. Freedom can mean doing anything one wishes, which eventually ends in anarchy. Liberty means having the freedom to do what is right, according to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. A civil government is meant to serve the people, not to control them. Liberty is the voluntary choice of the people to control themselves.

According to Prof. Burtness:

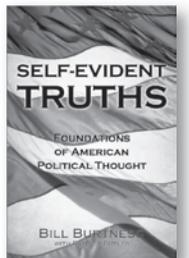
The Biblical view of man's relationship to the state is that God is sovereign, the individual is the servant of God, and the state is the servant of the individual. But the pagan view of man and the state is that the State is sovereign and the individual is the servant of the state.

Society crumbles and kids turn to hedonism when teaching right from wrong is removed from school curriculum. America's form of government requires individual character over which a corresponding civil structure is implemented. When character is missing, the government fails.

The non-sectarian humanist goal of education is to produce the "self-actualized child," one who "recognizes no higher authority than 'self,'" an outcome which will eventually end in failure and anarchy.

Burtness writes, "We must be careful that in our homes, schools, and churches we are building self-governing character in the next generation that can create and sustain liberty rather than dependent character." Dependent people depend on authority to control them. Those who believe in something bigger than themselves behave well because of internal character.

Our nation and our public schools would improve if we could get professor Burtness' book into the hands of every student, teacher, neighbor, and politician possible.



FOCUS: A Survival Guide for Religious Believers on Campus

by Dr. John Zmirak

Originally appeared in the Fall 2015 issue of the Intercollegiate Review. Reprinted with permission.

If you're an orthodox believer at a mainstream college, you don't need me to tell you that you feel like an oddball, maybe even besieged. Your professors and most of your peers would treat your most deeply held beliefs with condescension and probably horror, if they knew about them.

So what should you do about it?

If you had asked my advice even a few years ago, I would have told you to be the turd in the liberals' punchbowl. When I was an undergraduate in the 1980s, I did everything in my power to challenge leftist orthodoxies. I saw offending liberals as a key public service, which I dubbed "insensitivity training." I relied on, and fought for, the principle of free speech.

That's long gone on campuses now.

My advice today? Grit your teeth, do your reading, make some friends, get your degree, and then make like Lot fleeing Sodom: never look back.

Sounds depressing, right? Well, I do have some good news, as you'll see.

Big Mother Is Watching You

Colleges are much less tolerant than they were even back when I was in school. Instead of welcoming free, vigorous debate designed to prepare people for adulthood, many campuses are turning the classroom into a "safe space" where infantilized pseudo-victims can wallow in their phantom pains

for four long, pricey years before the college dumps them into the real world and sends the bill. The tenets of your faith, if you stood up for them, might count as "microaggressions," "trigger words," or even "harassment." Citing free speech won't get you far on most campuses nowadays.

If your creed is anything like mine, it is by any contemporary secular standard "homophobic," "transphobic," "patriarchal," "sexually repressive," and opposed to "abortion rights." There is no way to airbrush any orthodox monotheist religion, especially biblical or ecclesial Christianity, to make it acceptable to secular progressives. It would take full-on plastic surgery, and you saw what that did to the Episcopal Church, Bruce Jenner, and every Jesuit college.

As someone who delighted in debating professors and students in and out of the classroom, it pains me to recommend a "covert-ops" approach. But the battlefield has shifted, and you are now deep behind enemy lines.

It is not just campuses that have become increasingly intolerant of religious faith; the whole society is moving in this direction. Look at what happened to Mozilla cofounder Brendan Eich, who was forced out as CEO for a political

contribution he had made years earlier in support of a ballot proposition in favor of natural marriage. Now imagine taking a bold stand for positions that are in line with the tenets of your faith but that don't comply with liberal orthodoxy. If you're writing articles or even posting on social media, that all becomes part of your "permanent record" and will follow you to potential employers down the road.

So keep your head down, and keep your faith. That last part can be difficult when peers and professors attack your religious beliefs as "retrograde" or "reactionary." But you can do it. You can do it even if your campus ministry soft-pedals any supernatural aspect of your religion, privileging instead some social justice activism. If that's the case, go find a local church and pray with the grown-ups at a faithful congregation. You may spot fellow students there. Befriend them.

You can also find like-minded students in organizations like the Intercollegiate Studies Institute-affiliated group on campus, Young Americans for Liberty, College Republicans, or your campus pro-life club. Maybe even a Greek organization, if those haven't been banned from your campus. Their meetings could be a "safe space" for you.

The Good News

Now that you're good and paranoid, let me give you the good news: you're right, and your peers and professors are wrong. They may condescend to your faith and condemn your views, but they are profoundly deluded.

The modern secular mind-set is nakedly self-contradictory. On one hand, it acts as if each human life, and each vagary of every eighteen-year-old, is profoundly significant. Every aspiration, trauma, or sensitivity any student expresses must be honored and respected. The choices of each human being are so important that we must reshape our culture and creeds to remove any obstacles to the full unfolding of each precious, unique human snowflake. This post-Kantian creed is an exaggeration and distortion of the Christian idea of the person with an immortal soul, of infinite dignity and value in the eyes of God.

On the other hand, all those precious snowflakes in chinos and Pink sweat-pants learn in biology class that the human species is just another cosmic error, a random genetic mutation that survived because it was fittest. In physics class they learn that our every thought and feeling is the side effect of deterministic subatomic interactions in the neurons of our brains. And so on, in virtually every other class. It turns out that human beings are nothing special, and what happens to any one of them is moot within seventy years, since he/she melts into nothingness, like any snowflake.

Modern secular liberals are like post-apocalyptic primitives, who rely on leftover technology whose workings they don't understand. So they worship machines as gods. The "machine" that survived the apocalypse was the Christian respect for human dignity, the very idea of human rights. You didn't find that in ancient Rome or Confucian China. And if we keep regressing to primitivism, you soon won't find it here. Bereft of an energy source, the machine will stop working altogether. But for now, it's still generating a warm glow of importance around human beings, so the liberals gather and pray to it.

You know why it works and how it might stop. They don't. They might not appreciate your telling them—but you should feel some responsibility to take people aside, now and then, and share the truth. But do it kindly. Imagine them as denizens of a Mad Max world who pray to an ATM. And you're a banker. So share the wealth.

Dr. John Zmirak is author of numerous books, most recently The Race to Save Our Century. Intercollegiate Review is a print magazine and daily site for conservative students that was first published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute in 1965. The Institute was founded by William F. Buckley Jr. as "a counterattack against the progressive ideology taking over American colleges."



The Day Christians were Martyred on American Soil

by Todd Starnes

Originally published on Todd Starnes' American Dispatch at FoxNews.com on October 2, 2015. Reprinted with permission.

Life or death was determined by the answer to a single question: are you a Christian?

That was the question asked by an anti-Christian gunman who stormed into a classroom at Oregon's Umpqua Community College.

Eyewitnesses say the shooter targeted Christians.

Kortney Moore was inside the classroom. She told the Roseburg News-Review that the shooter ordered students to get on the ground — and then told them to stand up and state their religion.

"And they would stand up and he said, 'Good, because you're a Christian, you're going to see God in just about one second,'" Stacy Boylan said in a televised report. "And then he shot and killed them."

His 18-year-old daughter was struck in the back by a bullet — that traveled down her spine. She survived. Miss Moore, too, survived.

Davis Jaques, publisher of the *Roseburg Beacon News*, said he received a text message from a student who said she was inside the classroom. "The shooter was lining people up and asking if they were Christians," the message read. "If they said yes, then they were shot in the head. If they said no or didn't answer, they were shot in the leg."

Christians were martyred for their faith — on American soil — a fact mostly ignored by most of the Mainstream Media and the White House.

The New York Times only mentioned that the gunman inquired about people's "religions" and one cable television news channel opined that the shooter's motive was unclear.

President Obama's behavior in the aftermath of the massacre was quite frankly unpresidential. Instead of calling for religious tolerance — he delivered an unhinged tirade on gun control. "Somebody somewhere will comment and say Obama politicized this issue," the president said. "Well, this is something we should politicize."

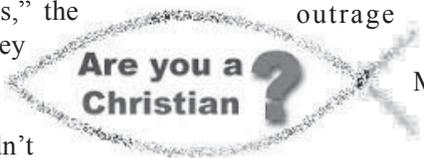
But I reckon it's politically incorrect to address the persecution of Christians.

That could explain why the White House has expressed less than passionate outrage over the near-genocide of Christians in the Middle East. And that could also explain why his administration has failed to secure the release of an American pastor being tortured in an Iranian jail.

These days "lambs being led to the slaughter" is not exactly a politically correct narrative.

I cannot even begin to imagine the courage it took for our fellow believers to take a stand — knowing that to do so — would require the ultimate sacrifice. But their families can take comfort in knowing that after they took their last breath on Earth, they took their first breath in Heaven.

Fox News Channel's Todd Starnes is an award-winning journalist and the author of four books. He resides in Brooklyn, New York.



Indoctrination *(Continued from page 1)*

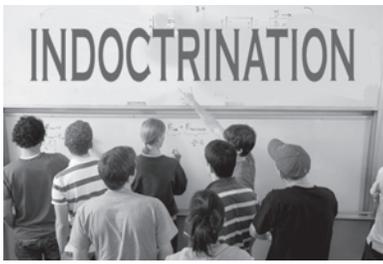
local school districts.

One Tennessee parent says, “To me, it’s almost like an indoctrination, not an introduction to a religion.” Another parent says, “I think that probably the teaching that is going on right now in seventh grade is not age-appropriate.”

The Tennessee legislature amended state law in 2014 to “entitle parents and legal guardians to review all teaching materials, instructional materials, and other teaching aids used in the classroom.”

Wilson and Robertson County state senators say, “We have received reports that parents are being refused access to material used in 7th-grade social studies regarding the teaching of Islam.” There are reports that classroom teachers are using handouts supplied by CAIR, the Council on Islamic-American Relations, an organization that many consider radical.

Jay Sekulow, Chief Council for the American Center for Law and Justice, started an online petition demanding that public school officials and the Dept. of Education “stop Islamic indoctrination



in our schools and protect the religious liberty of students.”

Tennessee school districts, including Wilson and Robertson, have denied a Freedom of Information Request made by Sekulow’s American Center for Law and Justice. The schools claim the

request for tests, quizzes, assignments, and lesson plans about world religion for social studies classes would cost districts too much money to compile.

But districts must supply that information to parents who request it. Some wonder if schools may be trying to cover their tracks rather than admit what they’ve been teaching.

Tennessee state Representative Sheila Butt is taking action. She recently introduced legislation to ban schools from teaching “religious doctrine” until students reach high school. The law would stipulate that when middle school students learn about the Middle East, they’d be taught about Islam but not required to learn and regurgitate its religious tenets. (EAGnews.org, 9-28-15 & 10-12-15) (*The Tennessean*, 9-17-15 & 10-8-15) (SpringHillHomepage.com, 9-3-15)

Drug Culture *(Continued from page 1)*

marketing campaigns promoting marijuana attract children to the drug. Anyone in any state can access Colorado pot shop websites that are professionally designed to make use of marijuana look attractive.

Businesses sell bagged marijuana as well as marijuana pills, candy, cookies, gum, and beverages. Many complain that the packaging is designed to be attractive to children.

One store advertises: “Our courteous and professional staff specializes in assisting first timers and experts alike” and boasts that “visitors from every state and over 50 countries agree” that their store is the “best.”

Smart Colorado is a volunteer group that “engages and informs Coloradans on the risks that marijuana poses to youth.” The group says, “The latest report should be read by



Colorado policymakers, law enforcement, public health professionals, and educators at all levels so we have a unified effort to help young people understand the dangers of marijuana use.” It should also be read by citizens and legislators in other states

that are considering legalization of marijuana.

Reuters reports that a new nationwide study shows that between 2001 and 2013, the number of adults using and abusing marijuana doubled. (10-22-15) (*Denver Post*, 9-30-15) (CBS, 9-20-15) (SmartColorado.org)

Union Case *(Continued from page 2)*

Mike Antonucci says that the benefits some union members enjoy due to collective bargaining are balanced out by sacrifices others make. He writes:

On average, union teachers may enjoy better salaries and benefits than nonunion teachers, but many individuals make tangible sacrifices under union contracts. Math teachers make less than they might because the union insists they be paid the same as physical education teachers

— even if there is a scarcity of math teachers and a glut of PE teachers. A teacher with seven years of experience makes less than a teacher with 10 years, regardless of relative skills, performance, or any other factor directly related to student learning.

The Supreme Court will hear arguments in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* sometime in the term that began in October and should issue a ruling next summer. (Reuters, 6-30-15) (*Education Next*, Winter 2016)

Common Core *(Continued from page 2)*

wrong.” The PACE/USC poll they used found that 52% of Californians support Common Core. The Hechinger Report is “an independent nonprofit, nonpartisan organization” based at the Teachers College of Columbia University.

This survey of 2,411 California citizens who are registered to vote shows that, in some cases, those surveyed may actually know more about Common Core than those who were conducting the poll.

In response to a question about whether Common Core is only in math and English language arts, 52% of those who said they were quite familiar with Common Core

responded that was wrong. While this was counted as an incorrect response, it is a correct response. Common Core is integrated into social studies, history, science, and other courses. Common Core standards directly address what should be read by students in history and science classes.

Another poll question asked whether states are allowed to add content to Common Core. Among those who said they were quite familiar with Common Core, 35% responded that adding content was not allowed. Although that was counted as a wrong answer, the fact is that the Common Core standards are copyrighted (by the NGA and CCSSO) and supposed to be used exactly as they are. There is an allowance for up to 15% of additional content. So, those who answered that states aren’t allowed to change content were at least partially right. If copyrighted material can only be enhanced by a maximum of 15% of additional material, that is not a substantial alteration. The 20% who responded that standards could be altered, which was counted as a correct answer, were closer to wrong.

Perhaps the most correct response to this question among the groups of respondents was the 56% of voters who answered that they were “unsure.” Being unsure could mean they knew about the copyright and they knew about the 15% rule. yet the possible responses offered by the poll gave no way to give a correct answer.

While critics of respondents’ ability to inform themselves, including the Hechinger Report article, elicited scorn that only 30% knew the truth, it was actually those asking the question who were most mistaken.

The questions for the poll were devised by a research center that analyzes California education, called PACE, in conjunction with the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California.

This brings up a critical issue with an education system obsessed with using test questions as the measure of student knowledge. The most knowledgeable students may give a “wrong” answer when the information they possess is greater than that allowed for in the scope of the question.

A Useless Poll

American Principles in Action senior fellow Jane Robbins explains that “the phrasing of poll questions can substantially affect the response.” (*ThePulse2016.com*, 5-6-15)

Robbins says that lack of transparency about poll questions renders many polls about Common Core useless. An individual who is asked if they “favor Common Core” is more likely to answer in the affirmative when the question is



preceded by a description like “rigorous standards designed to improve your child’s academic performance.” Few would be

against “rigor” or “better performance.” So when pollsters don’t provide actual polling questions, the results of the poll are dubious.

Robbins found some surprises when she analyzed a May of 2015, NBC poll. The poll claimed 50% of parents favor Common Core, but the actual questions asked were never provided. She says, “This lack of transparency apparently violates American Association of Public Opinion Research standards, which require release of the entire questionnaire along with the research methodology.”

As Robbins explains, the lack of transparency is “especially problematic given that the poll results are being used for political purposes.” Common Core has become a hot political topic and some candidates and current legislators might change their opinions and actions depending on what they are told the public believes about the standards. Busy parents who lack the time to do their own research could also be influenced by how many other parents approve of the Common Core scheme.

The most shocking thing Robbins found out about the NBC poll is that it was actually done in conjunction with Pearson Education, “the mega-publisher that has been in bed with the Common Core developers from the beginning of the initiative and is poised to make millions (at least) from this educational transformation in curriculum and assessments.”

The final piece of the puzzle renders this particular poll nearly useless. Robbins says, “NBC’s Education Nation, which produced the report along with Pearson, has received over \$4.35 million in funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — the primary financier of the Common Core standards.” Her final analysis of the NBC poll is:

What we have, then, is an opaque report based on undisclosed questions funded by organizations that have a tremendous stake in the success of Common Core.

The lessons learned from Common Core polls is that the more parents understand about the standards, the less likely they are to support them. No matter what tricks interested parties may use in order to sell Common Core, the truth will eventually be known and hopefully the scheme will be ditched.