



Georgians for Returning Local Control to Public Education

2013 Legislative Agenda

RESCIND Common Core national standards and withdraw from the national PARCC tests.

Common Core is a nationwide initiative designed to herd states into national K-12 standards and national tests – which ultimately will lead to a national curriculum and silence curriculum input from local parents, taxpayers, and educators. **Academic concerns: lower standards** with Common Core than the Georgia Performance Standards it has replaced. The primary problem with Common Core is that it will put control over our children's education in the hands of unaccountable progressive education "reformers" in Washington. **Financial:** The technology required to implement the assessments is estimated to cost Georgia taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. The additional annual expense of the assessments has led cost expert Zeev Wurman to conclude that the testing cost per pupil may be as high as \$100 annually (currently averages about \$5 per student annually) -- and this isn't counting the cost of paying people to score the parts of the test that can't be machine-scored. Learn more: www.StopCommonCore.com

Amend HB 797, the enabling legislation to the Charter Commission recently approved by the voters. There are MANY amendments needed to this legislation in order to make the commission exactly what the proponents said the commission would be: **an appeals board ONLY** for charter petitioners who are denied by the local school board.

Amendments needed to ensure the parents DO have the control promised with the constitutional amendment:

- 1) **Charter school boards:** Currently the bill allows the members of this board to be appointed by the charter petitioner and doesn't require parents to be on the board. Amend to require parents ARE the majority vote on the charter school board. To prevent "taxation without representation" the members should be elected by the parents of the charter school. Members could include others in the civic and business community.
- 2) **Oversight on per diem** for appointed commissioners is needed to ensure similar ethics violations as seen in the General Assembly don't occur.
- 3) **Gifts, grants, and donations:** The language should be amended to ensure these financial gifts are not accepted by the charter commission to be dispersed to the charter schools **without prior review by the local community** to ensure there are no mandates with the funding which could control the running of the local school which would be in opposition to the goals and values of the parents and taxpayers funding the charter school.
- 4) **Citizenship:** Amend this bill to require that investors of Georgia Charter Schools also be U.S. citizens. Green card residency status should not qualify. Ensure that certified U.S. teachers are a certain percentage of the teaching staff in order for the school to continue receiving taxpayer funds. The general charter school law would have to be amended as well, as currently charter schools can waive out of the "certified" portion of Title XX.
- 5) **Commission oversight of charter schools:** Lines 88-204 of this bill is a pretty lengthy list of oversight for a board that is **ONLY** to review charter petitioner appeals! **Local control seems non-existent.**
- 6) **Virtual Schools:** There is no cap on the number of virtual academies that can be established by the commission or a cap on the number of students that can be enrolled statewide. This presents two problems: 1) the success of using virtual academies as a substitute for "brick and mortar" schools is untested. What is being taught? What is the impact of removing a child from the school environment? Can children achieve academic success in a virtual school? These questions are unanswered. 2) Not knowing how many students could be siphoned off into charter and virtual schools, local school boards could face challenges planning for the future needs of their district's student population.

Amend H.B. 713 (School-to-Work Act) requiring a career path be selected at kindergarten level beginning 2013/2014 school year. Calling for a repeal of this law. At the most this should be **voluntary** for school districts, **NOT mandatory**.

Amend S.B. 289 to end the mandate for online learning. This should be **optional** for school systems based on the desires of the community and budgets. Local school systems will be required to pay \$250 per course per student per semester... not currently in the budget of many local school boards who are strapped for cash. Also, without printed textbooks, printed homework, printed tests, and NO teacher to monitor the content, there are concerns that parents could never know what students are learning on line.

H.B. 325 - The Tax Credit Scholarship Program. The way the law is written, and the fact that it is unaudited, has invited fraud and has proven to be a huge waste of taxpayer dollars that could be going to the state for public education. A review of the financial records of the private companies that manage these funds (Student Scholarship Organizations) reveals that millions of tax dollars diverted for this fund are not being distributed to student scholarships as required. This is millions of dollars that could be applied to public education funding. In addition, certain SSOs and private schools have allowed parents to apply their tax credit donations to their own child's tuition. This is illegal according to the Georgia Dept. of Revenue. **Despite these documented problems, legislation is being proposed in the 2013 session to double the annual cap on this program to \$100 million. Oppose this increase and call for a state audit of all SSOs.**

"Parent Trigger" legislation being proposed. Parent trigger laws allow parents at any persistently failing school to gather a simple majority of parent signatures and either fire the principal, fire half of the teachers, or turn it into a private charter school. Concerns that this will mislead parents into converting their school to a charter which will be managed by a private education management organization, NOT the parents. (Charter school law DOES NOT REQUIRE parents sit on the charter school board). Struggling schools need help from district leaders and the community, not a closure notice. Collaboration -- not hostile takeovers -- is the most effective way to improve public schools.

Longitudinal Data System. Citizens should call for an end to the data collection mandated by the Obama administration with Race to the Top funding and Common Core national standards - collecting massive amounts of private information on students and families (without the parent's knowledge or permission) and making it accessible to federal bureaucrats who can then share it with other agencies and even private entities. StopCommonCore.com/student-privacy/

Oppose H.B. 9 Lowering age for mandatory school attendance. Prefilled by Rep. Keisha Waits to lower the mandatory school entry from age six to five and to raise the exit from age 16 to 17. This unnecessary change in the law takes away a parents right to choose whether they want to send their 5-year old to school. Extending the compulsory age to 17 ignores the real problems causing high student drop outs. Without change in education methods and policies, in the classroom a floundering 16-year old will simply become a floundering 17-year old. This measure would require two extra years of full-time equivalent (FTE) funding per student. But in a time when the legislature is calling for additional cuts to education wouldn't this put an additional financial burden on local school systems?

Push for review of federal education dollars received for Georgia's public schools in order to determine if accepting the funding results in costing school systems more to comply with the funding mandates than the actual dollars received. According to Georgia's Department of Education, federal education funds are only seven percent of Georgia's education funding but the mandates, rules, regulations, and policies that come with the funding are controlling all aspects of Georgia's education system including curriculum, teaching methods, testing/assessments, classroom student makeup, discipline policies, and data collection. The U.S. Constitution gives the states, NOT the federal government, the authority to educate its students.

Concerned Georgian citizens are calling on our state legislators to work with us to replace "government schools" with
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS.

*It is time to return control of all publicly funded schools to those best able to determine the education needs for our children.... parents, the community tax payers, and our **duly elected** local school boards.*

Learn more about these issues and how you can be involved:

www.EmpowerEdGaAction.org

www.StopCommonCore.com

www.WakeUpGeorgia.info

