

15. EDUCATION AND THE CONSTITUTION #3

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Former Senator Schmitt Challenges Parents and Other Citizens to Take Control of Education

The nation's public education system fails to meet the needs of a representative democracy. Americans who recognize this fact must work to recover the nation's future before it is irrevocably lost. More tax dollars will not accomplish this recovery. Heaven knows we have tried that approach for half a century with nothing but regression to show for it. Recovery will come only with more individual and collective grassroots commitment to using common sense to truly reform how and what children are taught.

First and foremost, the Constitution's 9th and 10th Amendments' delegations of rights and powers, and the absence of "education" as an enumerated power of Congress in Article I, puts responsibility and obligation for education squarely on the people and the States. In this light, parents and guardians must be their children's continuing teacher, motivator, and advocate for learning, even after formal schooling begins. At the point their children start schooling outside the home, parents can no longer become just hopeful observers rather than providers. The family environment must stress the importance of education no matter the level of schooling of the parents. The child's future always will be in jeopardy without parental involvement and encouragement at the beginning and end of each school day, on

weekends, and during vacations. The parent almost certainly will benefit as much as the child through such personal commitment and interaction.

Parents also must fight for a massive reduction in administrative overhead and for a reallocation of existing State resources so that teachers' salaries and professionalism can be raised to levels commensurate with their critical role in preserving the American Republic. Against the dogma of the unions, they must help teachers fight for pay and retention based on merit. They must fight for choice in where children go to school and forcefully advocate objective instruction in basic knowledge, virtue, morals, and good behavior. In this context, parents and businesses should organize privately funded initiatives to fill the gaps currently existing in the government school system. These initiatives can support vouchers, charter schools, field trips, instructional materials, day-to-day classroom needs, and the like.

Parents should not allow the education of the many to be sacrificed to the need to discipline or attend to the few. They should insist that schools deal with special needs as, indeed, "special" needs, whether or not a consequence of a particular ability, disability, or attitude. Parents should work together to elect school boards that will require

teachers' colleges and continuing education to emphasize knowledge rather than methods. They should get involved in the selection of teaching media, that is, textbooks, films, and other materials, so that such materials inform about subject matter rather than indoctrinate students in a particular political point-of-view.

Elementary and secondary schooling prepares the child to assume the responsibilities and opportunities of adulthood, contributing to the economic foundations of the Republic. Some high school graduates will use their education to immediately enter the civilian jobs or the armed forces, whereas others will continue their formal education in institutions of higher learning. Most importantly, all graduates will be members of the nation's electorate, demanding a continuous, life-long dedication to the search for new knowledge, information, and background on current events.

The lack of informed perspectives about science and technology constitutes a particularly modern concern. It has formed an insidious social cancer that every day grows more dangerous to the health and well being of individuals and to American security and economic competitiveness. Along with the increasing educational gaps in math and

science within the electorate, the growing chasm between the supply and the demand for highly educated, homegrown science and engineering talent undermines the nation's ability to compete internationally and to provide for our national security. Our principle economic and security competitors in the world, particularly China, do not suffer from a similar problem.

To fully repair the elementary and secondary educational system, parents, guardians, and others concerned about the country's future, should work with like-minded teachers to take over the teachers' unions as well as change current attitudes in Washington about who controls education. In so doing, the future of education can be separated from government and returned to the people. Only then can teachers start to work fully on behalf of students and find such work to be far more professionally and financially rewarding than it is today.

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