THE SCANDAL OF DRUG EDUCATION FUNDS

by Phyllis Schlafly April 13, 1995

Since Congressman John Kasich is looking for more ways to cut federal spending, I suggest that he zero out the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA). Billions (yes, billions) of taxpayer dollars have been spent on this project to try to "educate" schoolchildren not to use illegal drugs, and the results range from waste to corruption.

A Michigan Senate investigating committee, under the chairmanship of Sena tor Jack Welbom, has just released a report exposing a giant scandal in the way the funds were spent in that state. Chances are that, if other legislatures tracked the use of their state's DFSCA funds, they would discover similar misuse of taxpayers' momes.

After months of investigation and hearings, the Michigan committee found that bureaucrats in the state department of education illegally diverted millions of dollars of federal anti-drug funds into development and expansion of the state authored, controversial health, sex and psychological curriculum called the "Michi gan Model." That course was the pet project of the Michigan public school estab lishment, but parents fought it all the way because it was anti-parent Values Clarifi cation (i.e., group psychotherapy).

The Michigan public school establishment was determined to ram this psy chological curriculum down the throats of schoolchildren despite the opposition of their parents. Since this was the state with the strongest branch of the National Education Association, the bureaucrats were confident they could steamroller it through.

When Congress appropriated the DFSCA funds, a veritable river of federal money started flowing into the state and the educrats saw their opportunity to use it to enforce use of the Michigan Model. It didn't deter them in the slightest that Congress very specifically legislated that DFSCA funds could be used only for drug prevention education.

According to the new Senate report, the Michigan educrats diverted some DFSCA funds into an organized campaign to discredit and intimidate the parents who opposed the Michigan Model. These state education department bureaucrats kept files on parents, made photos and videos of them, and trained coordinators how to "handle" parents.

The state education department bureaucrats used federal anti-drug funds to run a computer bulletin board to exchange messages regarding how to obtain infor mation, pictures and videos of parents opposed to the Michigan Model. Parents

were sarcastically ridiculed as the "Bob and Mary Show."

The state bureaucrats even invited People for the American Way to assist in this anti-parent campaign. They all joined in labelling parents with nasty epithets such as "extremists."

The educrats diverted other DFSCA funds into an organized campaign to force local school districts to "sign their drug prevention funds over to Michigan Model regional coordinators," who would spend the federal anti-drug for the Michi gan Model instead of for drug education. The Michigan Model has a modicum of drug information in it, but federal funds could only legally be spent for that small portion.

The diversion ofDFSCA funds included a variety of unethical actions in the granting of contracts. The committee exposed conflicts of interest, double-dipping by state employees, markups on materials, excessive administrative overhead and travel budgets, and unnecessary payments to high-priced sex education consultants and friends of the bureaucracy.

According to the committee, the educrats probably violated federal law by using a federally funded bulletin board to lobby Congressman William Ford against Gover nor John Engler's drug education plans and to lobby state legislators for funds and support. State employees also engaged in a deliberate attempt to cover up their actions.

The result is that there was no effective anti-drug program for schoolchildren. Michigan Drug Control Director Robert Peterson testified that Michigan students are using nearly every illegal drug at significantly higher rates than the national aver age, and that Michigan eighth graders use inhalants and marijuana at twice the na tional average.

The Michigan Senate Committee began its investigation in late 1993. By early 1994, the educrats realized that the truth was closing in on them and they might be subject to criminal prosecution for misuse of federal funds, and the state of Michi gan might have to repay the Federal Government the more than $30 million that had been diverted.

The educrats were ingenious in protecting themselves. They got their friend, House Education and Labor Committee Chairman William Ford, to insert one little paragraph into the 1994 education law (H.R. 6) retroactively authorizing anti-drug funds to be spent for a "comprehensive school health program" (i.e., the Michigan Model).

It was back in 1991 that the General Accounting Office reported that the one billion spent by that date through the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act had had no measurable effect in reducing the use of illegal drugs.

Billions of dollars later, there still isn't. Congressmen should close down the DFSCA and zero out all its funds.