The Phyllis Schlafly Report

GOP Charges Ahead on Education

By John and Andy Schlafly

January 31, 2023

Proving once again that he is in touch with ordinary Americans, Donald Trump selected education for the first video message of his 2024 presidential campaign. On Saturday, Trump emphasized education in addresses in the early primary states of New Hampshire and South Carolina.

School performance fell sharply during the pandemic, as liberal governors shuttered schools for prolonged periods and required masks at the expense of learning. Children became pawns in the tyrannical measures taken under the guise of responding to Covid.

The last full year before Covid was 2019, and it was the last year of 50 million students enrolled in public schools. That total has since fallen, and experts predict a long-term decline in public school enrollment for decades into the future.

Massachusetts, long ranked at the top nationwide in student achievement, has dropped to a 19-year low in its performance as the Democrat-controlled state pushes Leftist ideology in schools. The biggest declines in performance were by minorities and low-income students, and children who did not learn English at home.

Throughout the rest of our country, the decline in student achievement and increase in illiteracy is shocking. In Pennsylvania, the 3rd graders reading with the expected level of proficiency dropped from 60% to 50% over the last three years.

There was a red wave in Ohio in the last election, after Trump held many rallies there. Republicans increased their supermajority in its Senate, attained a supermajority in its House, and won both the governorship and the vacant U.S. Senate seat.

Now it's time to cash in on that political capital by targeting the Ohio education system, which ranks in the bottom half nationally in learning basic reading and arithmetic skills. The very first bill introduced in the Ohio Senate is to take power away from an independent state board, which has failed to get the job done.

This bill would allow the Republican governor to appoint a new education director to establish curriculum and strong standards for academic achievement. Rather than diffusing responsibility, this legislation would establish one person to be publicly accountable for the failure to teach youngsters how to read and add.

Trump boldly calls for empowering parents to directly elect school principals, to hold them accountable for their failure to teach basic skills. A bestselling book in 1955 was *Why Johnny Can't Read*, and the simple answer was because schools are not using the superior method of teaching kids how to read, which is phonics.

Nearly 70 years later, schools are still not using phonics, and as a result perhaps 45 million Americans cannot even fill out a ballot in order to vote as they intend. So instead some of those ballots are being filled out for them by political hacks, who are just fine with more illiteracy.

Young adults have long been bashful about never learning how to read, rather than question why some of their friends can read but they cannot. But as traditional inhibitions disappear on social media, young people are themselves beginning to ask publicly why they were not taught to read.

Those harmed by inadequate schools are a voting bloc that Republicans can and must reach in order to win future elections. Georgia and Arizona are two swing states that Republicans must win in 2024 to capture the White House, and both rank among the ten states having the most illiteracy.

When people cannot read, then they cannot access and process independent political information needed to fill out ballots in an informed way. The higher the illiteracy, the more ballots that are filled out as part of ballot harvesting and massive drop-box dumps, and the more difficult it is to win on principle.

Meanwhile, even a liberal Republican governor has apparently gotten the message that the public is fed up with liberal ideology in school, rather than instruction on basic skills. Last year Utah's Governor Spencer Cox vetoed a bill that would have prohibited male-bodied athletes from competing in girls' sports, as did the liberal Republican governor in Indiana.

In both states the Republican legislatures promptly overrode those vetoes that pandered to the Left. Likewise, the Republican Arkansas legislature overrode the veto by its anti-Trump Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson of a bill prohibiting transgender medical interventions on children.

Last week the Republican legislature in Utah passed a bill to prohibit transgender medical interventions on children, and its left-leaning Republican Governor Cox was smart enough to sign it into law the next day after it reached his desk. Lessons learned, with more political ground to gain ahead.

As illiteracy climbs in the United States, this new focus by Republicans on learning is a political necessity. Many traditionally Democrat voters have children in underperforming schools, and they are not learning to read as they should be.

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