Georgia insight

Sue Ella Deadwyler
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"She hath done what she could."
Mark 14:8a
"…and having done all … stand."
Ephesians 6:13c

Common Core: National Take-Over of K – 12 Curricula

"The Common Core gang in 1996 gathered a cozy group of rich big businessmen, six governors, and a few other politicians and founded an organization called Achieve Inc. Working backward from the 12th grade down to kindergarten, this eventually morphed into the Common Core State Standards."
– "National Takeover of School Curriculum," by Phyllis Schlafly, February 26, 2014

Common Core is a set of K – 12 English language arts (ELA) and math standards, primarily developed by trade groups and private interests in Washington, D.C.; funded by the Gates Foundation; copyrighted in 2010 by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, as sole owners and developers.

Achieve Inc., mentioned in the quote above, began implementing Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 13 states, without calling it a national effort, since a nationally mandated curriculum is unconstitutional. Instead, Achieve approached each state department of education and by 2009, 35 states had aligned their curriculum with Common Core. By 2011, 45 states had adopted the sight-unseen pig-in-a-poke that had never been field tested.

Whether with amazing naivete or complicity in the plan, Georgia agreed to implement CCSS to qualify for a $400 million Race to the Top education reform grant received in August 2010, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to improve schools.

Georgia's application was prepared through a partnership between Governor Perdue's Office, his Office of Student Achievement, the Georgia Department of Education and education stakeholders, four working groups, professionals, NGOs, policy makers, philanthropies, and businesses. With that, Georgia joined 44 other states, the District of Columbia, 2 territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity, in formally adopting CCSS sight-unseen. Result: transitioning from Georgia standards to Common Core became "Absolute Priority 1."

Federal Laws Defied by CCSS

The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act states:
"Nothing in this act" authorizes any federal official to "mandate, direct, or control" school curriculum.

The 1970 General Education Provisions Act states:
"[N]o provision of any applicable program shall be construed to authorize any" federal official to "exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction or selection of instructional materials by any" school system.

The 1979 law creating the Department of Education prohibits the DOE from exercising "any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum" or "program of instruction: of any school system. The amended Elementary and Secondary Education Act says no DOE funds "may be used … to endorse, approve, or sanction" any K – 12 curriculum.

Excising Common Core

Excise: to remove, by cutting out or away
– Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition

Excising can be painful, especially when done step-by-step, instead of all at once. However, that's where we are with Common Core. Many of us want the entire curriculum jerked out, immediately. That would be great, but "death by a thousand cuts" seems to be required now.

This is the situation: To get Race to the Top money, Georgia had to adopt, sight-unseen, Common Core State Standards. Any good Southerner should know better than to sign on the dotted line without knowing the content of the agreement, but that was the deal. The money was granted and Georgia's locally developed curriculum is being transitioned into the national Common Core State Standards intended to transform K – 12 students into job-ready graduates who will work in local businesses. Now, almost four years after that grant arrived, Common Core is unveiled and Georgians are horrified that the state's superior standards are being transitioned into basic workforce development, rather than well-rounded academic instruction.

Legislative Reaction

In 2013, S.B. 203 was introduced by Senator William Ligon to exempt Georgia from Common Core State Standards. It would create the 24-member Curriculum Content Standards Advisory Council of parents, teachers and colleges and authorize local school systems to decide whether to conform their curriculum and instruction to Georgia's own performance standards during the two year period, as math and English language arts standards are being revised.

S.B. 167 would protect personally identifiable student information by limiting categories of data to be collected and disclosed without parental consent, while requiring parental permission for collection and/or disclosure of additional data. In addition, it prohibits the use of student records for commercial purposes and ensures that parents may access those records.

S.B. 167 and S.B. 203 were merged into one bill – **S.B. 167** – with three overall purposes: (a) provide an orderly end to Georgia's experiment with national standards, a.k.a. "Common Core" or "College and Career Ready" standards; (b) limit student data collection and sharing; and (c) provide new student privacy protections that prevent life-long data tracking.

S.B. 167 Benefits to Georgia

1. Gives flexibility to school systems;
2. Begins the math revision process immediately after it's signed into law;
3. Returns to Georgia the control of writing and revising curriculum content standards;
4. Sets up a Content Standards Advisory Council;
5. Prohibits the State Board of Education from adopting any national or federally prescribed standards, including federal or national standards for science, social studies, health and sex education;
6. Ensures that Georgia maintains control of tests, does not become entangled with tests tied to national or multi-state standards; and
7. Protects children and parents with strong limits on data collection and data-tracking.

ACTION – Support. Before March 5th, call House Education Committee members Representative Brooks Coleman, Ch., 404 656-9210 and Representative Mike Dudgeon, Vice-Chairman, 404 656-0298.
NOTE: :Prompt action is imperative. March 5th is the 32nd day of the 40-day session. Time is fleeting!

Targeted: Georgia's Definition of Marriage

"Recognition of Marriage. (a) The state shall recognize as marriage only the union of man and woman. Marriages between persons of the same sex are prohibited in this state. (b) No union between persons of the same sex shall be recognized by this state as entitled to the benefits of marriage."
– Constitution of the State of Georgia, Article I, Section IV, Paragraph I

On February 24, 2014 Atlanta United States Congressman John Lewis and Mayor Kasim Reed jointly announced the launch of a 14-state initiative of Southerners for the Freedom to Marry campaign, partnering with 12 Southern equality organizations to "overturn the anti-gay constitutional amendments pushed through over the past decade, and increase momentum for the freedom to marry."

Congressman Lewis views same-sex marriage as the civil rights issue of the day and Freedom to Marry agrees with him, as stated in their organizational strategy for action: "We secured the freedom to marry in 17 states and our nation's capital … still far short of the 34 states that had ended race-based marriage discrimination when the Supreme Court ruled in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). Freedom to Marry is fast-tracking its proven strategy for winning states in all three manners available – through the legislature, at the ballot, and in court."

The Issue: Same-sex Demands vs. Religious Liberty

Q. Should a state be forced by a judge, court or political pressure to ignore religious beliefs, community values and centuries-old laws to accommodate the sexual proclivities of others?

A. No, but recent court decisions overturned marriage laws in Kentucky and Texas.

Q. Should a Christian T-shirt maker be forced to make gay pride apparel?

A. No, but after refusing to print gay pride designs for a local homosexual group, Hands On Originals in Kentucky needed Alliance Defending Freedom to explain consitutional rights to the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission.

Q. Should a columnist be fired for writing a column critical of "homosexual rights?"

A. No, but Crystal Dixon, a black Christian human resources employee of University of Toledo, was fired for arguing that those choosing to embrace a homosexual lifestyle are not "civil rights victims." She sued to get her job back. In December 2012, a federal judge dismissed her lawsuit, which she is appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court.

S.B. 377 Preservation of Religious Freedom Act Poised to pass, Set Aside

If S.B. 377 has a "ghost of a chance" to pass this session, it MUST pass the Senate Rules committee and be voted on by the Senate no later than Monday, March 3rd. These are the facts:

- For 21 years, the United States has had a federal law similar to this bill, but the federal law does not extend to the states.
- Inmates in federal prisons are protected by the federal law and this bill would give Georgians the same protection now provided to federal inmates.
- 31 states have passed laws reflecting the federal law; it's time for S.B. 377 to pass here.

After a senator requested S.R. 377 to be on the calendar for Monday, the Rules Committee chairman set it aside, but it could STILL be put on Monday's calendar … IF the Lieutenant Governor and Rules Committee Chairman get enough calls asking for it.

ACTION – Contact (a) Lt. Governor Casey Cagle at 404 656-5030, fax 404 656-6739
(b) Senate Rules Committee Chairman Jeff Mullis, 404 656-0057

Will a Conference Committee Decide Con Con Language?

Regardless of the final language, a constitutional convention is a very dangerous experiment in this political climate, when there's no enforceable authority to control it.

S.R. 371, a renewed application asking Congress to call a convention proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, passed the Senate March 7, 2013 and passed the House February 20, 2014.

S.R. 70 was introduced January 29, 2013, urging Congress to adopt and pass to the states a balanced budget amendment. It passed the Senate February 26, 2014 and is in the House.

H.R. 1215, introduced February 4, 2014, applies for a convention of the states under Article V. It passed the House February 20, 2014 and is in the Senate.

S.R. 736, introduced January 14, 2014, applies for a convention of the states under Article V. It passed the Senate February 4, 2014 and is in the House.

All these bills could be sent to an appointed conference committee of three representatives and three senators, who would determine the final language and choose which number would be used for the final version. The conference committee would report the revised bill to the Senate and House, where it would get yea or nay votes, with no amendment allowed.

"Nay-Sayer" and Proud!

Recently, I was called a "Nay-Sayer," a name I wear proudly, because it means I'm against a constitutional convention and in good company. In 2004 the entire General Assembly became Nay-Sayers by rescinding *every* call Georgia ever made for a constitutional convention. I, also, feel honored to be among Nay-Sayers, such as Professor Christopher Brown, University of Maryland School of Law, who said, "We already have three branches of government, why create [a fourth] 'unknown power' to do even more mischief?"

Nay-Sayer Neil Cogan of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, said, "My understanding of the Federal Convention is that … neither the Congress nor the States may limit the amendments to be considered and proposed … [T]he convention may be controlled in subject matter only by itself and by the people… through the ratification process."

University of Utah School of Law Jefferson Fordham said, "A convention might propose a single amendment but it would clearly have a wider range." Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Goldberg said it this way, "[Proponents] should be reminded that the convention of 1787 … called 'for the sole and express purpose' of revising the Articles of Confederation … discarded the Articles and drafted the U.S. Constitution, despite [their] limited mandate."

Stanford Law School's Gerald Gunther said, "In my view, a convention cannot be effectively limited. But whether or not I am right, it is entirely clear that we have never tried the convention route … and … assurances about the ease with which a single issue convention can be had are unsupportable…."

In a nutshell, this is what they said: An Article V convention has never been called because it's an unknown power. Its subject matter can be controlled only by the convention itself and the people of the states … through … ratification … not through a convention. Once a convention convenes, its actions and outcome are unpredictable.
