

TO: Oregon House Committee on Education

FROM: Andrew Beach, Beaverton Resident

RE: Testimony in FAVOR of HB 2714

Chair Doherty, members of the House committee on education:

HB 2714 provides parents like me an opportunity to restore control of the education of my 3 children. Two of my children are in elementary school and one is in Community College, and I myself am a product of Oregon governmental education. As a consumer of the governmental education system, it's become increasingly apparent that education is becoming a centralized system supported by, and for the benefit of, special interests rather than parents and teachers. This bill provides some key supports for parents and teachers in the form of choice to be excused from the Smarter Balanced and like tests that only serve to profit testing companies and educational service providers and as a summative, end of the school year assessment provides no input to teachers to inform instructional changes/improvements to my children. I can walk into the classroom of any of my kids' teachers and they can immediately tell me what reading level they are, where they are proficient in math, and what topics/areas that we need to work on moving forward. The Smarter Balanced testing drives a wedge between parents, teachers and students, the 3 MOST important parties in public education. Instead, let's allow the teachers and parents to decide what assessments are necessary to monitor our kids' progress.

Additionally, this bill will support providing alternate requirements to receive a regular diploma and not a modified diploma if a parent chooses to refuse the tests. The development of criteria for graduation should be developed by local districts and parents.

District administrators and Oregon Department of Education will argue that they know best what is best, when evidence shows that local decision making and choice. And that the bills before the committee today will put at risk the ESEA waiver. My contention would be, let's locally fund education and refuse federal dollars in education. The farther the decisions are from the people effected, the more opportunity for outside influences to prevail. The CCSS are the perfect example of this as the standards will developed by a work group of 5 (five) non-educators as funded by two lobbying organizations (NGA, CCSSO) as funded by Achieve Inc (Gates Foundation). He who pays, benefits. So since Gates foundation is funding this, he benefits. Ask yourself, who knows best about educating MY children? ME, or the Gates foundation? ME, or the National Governors Association? None of these private interests are electable or accountable, but YOU are, please do what is right and restore parental rights in education.

Borrowed from Joy Pullman, Heartland Foundation published in 2013:

## **‘State-Led’ Common Core Pushed by Federally Funded Nonprofit**

April 24, 2013

*Joy Pullmann*

A central defense of the new national education standards, now generating spirited public debates, is that the federal government did not mandate or create them.

“The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that established a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics,” the official Common Core website states. In 2009, two nonprofit,

nongovernmental organizations called the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), convened government officials and dozens of consultants to write, rewrite, and, in June 2010, finally publish Common Core.

Five months later, 44 states had agreed to trade their K-12 math and English targets and tests for Common Core's. Those standards are now moving into 87 percent of public school classrooms, and reshaping textbooks and tests for even states and schools that did not elect Common Core. National Common Core tests, funded exclusively by the federal government, come out in 2014-2015.

### **Taxpayer Dollars Dominate**

Previous *School Reform News* reports have revealed state and federal tax money provide approximately half of CCSSO's operating funds, and that Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation money has been intimately involved in this behind-closed-doors process. NGA receives an even bigger proportion of its operating funds from tax dollars.

According to the latest IRS 990 form for the NGA's Center for Best Practices, the nonprofit arm of NGA that shares "a common pool of cash and investments" in 2010 received 80 percent of its \$14.8 million annual income from taxpayers. Tax documents also show that back in 2004, the earliest available documents traced, NGA received \$31 million from taxpayers. Tax funding has made up most of NGA's income every year in between.

Approximately half of NGA's tax-provided revenue comes from the feds, and the other half from membership dues states pay. In its latest financial statement showing \$16.9 million in total revenue for 2011-2012, \$4.9 million of that came from the feds, \$5.5 from states, and another \$3 million from corporate sponsors.

*SRN* contacted NGA for information about its finances and Common Core work. A spokeswoman referred all significant questions to NGA's communications director, then did not respond to several follow-up requests for that referral.

### **To Vote or Not to Vote**

Despite its heavy tax support, NGA is not required to make meetings, votes, and materials public like government bodies, and it has not done so for its work on Common Core.

NGA is a private trade organization whose actions have no legal binding on states. Governors do vote during NGA's two annual meetings to express shared priorities, former Virginia Gov. George Allen (R) told *School Reform News*, but "by the time they vote on a position the [resolutions] get watered down so much any objections are already accommodated. It's unlike legislatures, with committee hearings and votes."

Even so, NGA has not released what, if any, resolution 2009's governors voted on to authorize its subsequent Common Core work. Neither has it released the vote tally.

### **Not All Governors Involved**

Even if governors do vote on vague resolutions that have no legal power, not all attend

NGA meetings. The NGA spokeswoman would only say “we consider all governors members of the association,” but five governors have publicly withdrawn membership and refused to pay dues. These are from Florida, Maine, North Dakota, South Carolina, and Texas, and all are Republicans. Only one is from a state that has refused Common Core—those are Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia.

Spokesmen for the abstaining governors all essentially said NGA membership provided too little benefit for the money.

Texas “Gov. [Rick] Perry knows and works with governors all over the nation on a variety of different issues that are important to Texas and our country as a whole,” spokesman Josh Havens said. “We didn’t feel that active membership was a smart use of taxpayer funds.”

Texas governors have not been NGA members since 2003, he said. Before that, the state’s NGA dues ran \$125,000 to \$150,000 per year. Idaho suspended its membership in 2009 for financial reasons, and it just resumed paying about \$40,000 for membership and \$30,000 for travel to meetings in 2013, said Jon Hanian, a spokesman for Gov. Butch Otter (R).

“This governor is a strong believer in the Tenth Amendment and state’s rights, and he believes states are the laboratory of the republic,” Hanian said. “He values sharing his experience as well as sharing experience of other governors as he crafts public policy. When there have been attempts to have national policies to the detriment of the 10th amendment, he’s viewed his role as a counterbalance.”

### **Automatic Membership**

When other journalists have asked NGA about governors who want no part in NGA, spokesmen have responded by essentially saying governors cannot choose to leave. When Maine Gov. Paul LePage (R) pulled out of NGA in 2012, telling the *Bangor Daily News*, “I get no value out of those meetings. They are too politically correct and everybody is lovey-dovey and no decisions are ever made,” NGA’s communications director responded by saying all governors are NGA members even if they don’t pay dues.

She declined to say which states pay dues and why the dues vary.

## **Five People Wrote 'State-Led' Common Core**

June 7, 2013

*Joy Pullmann*

Many education leaders continue to insist the process for creating national education standards was “state-led,” referring to its incubation within two Washington DC-based nonprofits, the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers.

That seems to depend on how one defines “state-led.”

Former Virginia Gov. George Allen told *School Reform News* NGA is less a policy forum and more a networking opportunity, because any resolutions governors vote on are “not binding” and governors often disagree. He attended NGA meetings particularly so he could recruit IBM into Virginia.

“I find regional governors associations were much more practical,” he said. “You have similar concerns and similar philosophy.”

Somehow that unelected, unrepresentative networking forum quickly became a serious driver of education policy changes for the nation by creating and promoting Common Core, a list of what kids must know in math and English that 45 states have traded for their education standards.

### **How NGA Made Common Core**

NGA first directly involved governors in nationalizing education standards in June 2008, when it co-hosted an education forum with the Hunt Institute, a project of former North Carolina Gov. James Hunt Jr. In December 2008, NGA, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and Achieve Inc. released a report calling for national standards. The report recommended “a strong state-federal partnership” to accomplish this goal.

Those three nonprofits answered their own call the next few months, deciding to commission Common Core. NGA and Hunt’s press releases during that time, and a paper describing NGA’s Common Core process by former NGA education director Dane Linn, provide no endorsement of such activity from more than a handful of elected officials. NGA spokesmen refused requests for comment.

On June 1, 2009, NGA and CCSSO announced 46 states had joined “a state-led process to develop a common core of state standards,” without explaining what “joining” entailed. Two weeks later, the June 2009 NGA-Hunt education forum featured direct national standards advocacy to the 21 governors and staff who attended—the invitation-only event does not release attendee names—and spliced in new U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who spoke of national standards as a federal-state partnership.

“[M]y job is to help you succeed” in adopting “common national standards,” Duncan told the assembly. He said states initiated Common Core because a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded 2007 commission of 15 people, headed by two former governors, had recommended national standards .

The federal government “empowers states to decide what kids need to learn and how to measure it,” Duncan said. One of the ways it would do that, he said then, was funding national Common Core tests.

### **Three Main Committees**

By July 1, 2009, NGA and CCSSO had formed more committees . There were two work groups, whose dozen members in math and English wrote the standards. These included no teachers, but did include a few professors. Second were two feedback groups, who were supposed to provide research and advice to the writers. Those had 18 members

each, who were mostly professors but included one math teacher. Third was the validation committee , announced in September 2009, which acted as the final gate for Common Core. Their job was to “ensure [the standards] are research and evidence-based.”

While many people sat on these various committees, only one in sixty was a classroom teacher, according to teaching coach and blogger Anthony Cody . All of the standards writing and discussions were sealed by confidentiality agreements, and held in private. While Linn says six states sent intensive teacher and staff feedback, committee members weren't sure what effect their advice had, said Mark Bauerlein, an Emory University professor who sat on a feedback committee.

“I have no idea how much influence committee members had on final product. Some of the things I advised made their way into the standards. Some of them didn't. I'm not sure why or how,” he said. He said those who would know were the standards' lead writers: David Coleman and Susan Pimentel in English, and Jasonimba, Phil Daro, and William McCallum in math. Coleman and Jimba did not have previous experience writing standards.

Several people on the validation committee said the same: They had no idea what happened to their comments once they submitted them.

### **'Impossible to Deal With'**

“The ‘facilitators’ for the validation committee meeting were virtually impossible to deal with,” wrote James Milgram, a Stanford University professor who sat on the committee, in an email obtained by *School Reform News*. “The facilitators were emphatically trying to not let us act according to our charter, but simply sign or not sign a [final approval] letter when the charter said we had final say over the quality of the final [Common Core] and could revise or rewrite it if we deemed it necessary.”

Five of 29 validation committee members refused to sign off on Common Core. The validation committee's final report does not mention their objections. Its author later told Sandra Stotsky, another committee member, he had never received any written objections from committee facilitators, she said, although she and several others had sent them. He would have included them, he told her.

When government agencies solicit public comments on proposed policies, standard procedure is for the agency to publish all comments submitted and a response. This didn't happen with Common Core.

“It's like how laws are passed. Who wants to see how sausage is made?” Bauerlein said. “People want to look at what is the outcome: Are these standards good? It all depends on the curricula that gets created at the local level. You can have strong standards and end up with weak curricula. It's happening in many places, in fact.”

*This article has been corrected regarding CCSS lead authors' experience writing standards.*

Respectfully yours,

Andrew Beach  
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