

Submitter: Horst Meister
On Behalf Of:
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Censorship is futile in today's world. If children don't learn about controversial subjects in school, they will learn about them on the internet or from each other, and they will inform themselves whether their parents like it or not because children are naturally curious. All children will inevitably be exposed to viewpoints that their parents do not approve of regardless of their parents' religious or political beliefs in the ordinary course of daily events.

American Courts have ruled that parents have considerable authority to decide how to raise and educate their children, but those same courts have repeatedly ruled that parents' rights are not absolute. Parental rights must give way when children's rights are violated.

Parent's rights does not mean that public schools must conform to individual parents' personal ideas about education.

All parents have the same rights. Adopting the ideas of conservative parents to the exclusion of the ideas of parents who are not conservative denies the parental rights of parents who are not conservative. Removing materials from schools that conservative parents find objectionable denies the rights of parents who disagree with conservative viewpoints and who want their children to have access to those materials.

Parents are legally obligated to educate their children, but are not obligated to send them to public schools. Parents can choose to send their children to private or religious schools. But even when they do, parental rights regarding education are still subject to state regulations regarding curriculum and are still subject to the law. My parents sent me to Catholic schools; those schools followed the state-mandated curriculum, and in fact exceeded the state's minimum standards. I received a very good education in Catholic schools.

Both common and case law support the long-standing policy that education should prepare young people to think for themselves, even if thinking for themselves runs counter to the wishes of parents. Legal scholar Jeff Shulman wrote, "This effort may well divide child from parent, not because socialist educators want to indoctrinate children, but because learning to think for oneself is what children do."

The interests of parents conflict with the interests of children when a parent's desire to indoctrinate them with a particular worldview denies their child exposure to other

ideas and values that a young person might be interested in or want to learn about. Children are not programmable robots.

Most parents want their children to become independent adults who are able to manage their affairs, get along with others, think for themselves and succeed in life. Attempting to indoctrinate children with their parents' viewpoints compromises the ability of young people to think independently.

As a practical matter, it is extremely difficult for parents to indoctrinate their children in today's society because so much information is readily available that any child will inevitably be introduced to ideas that conflict with their parents' ideas.

Political scientist Robert Reich wrote, "Minimal autonomy requires, especially for its civic importance, that a child be able to examine his or her own political values and beliefs, and those of others, with a critical eye." If we value that end, "the structure of schooling cannot simply replicate in every particularity the values and beliefs of a child's home."

It is better and safer for children to learn about things that their parents may not approve of in a supervised school environment where teachers and counselors are available who can help children deal with the rough spots. Children will learn about such things anyway, it can't be prevented. They might as learn in safety.

SB 1583 should become law for the sake of our children.