

Chicago Tribune

BALKEMA FOR CONGRESS: Stop Common Core IL Director Warns of National Student Database, Enormous Costs

Posted By Jasmine, [Community Contributor](#)

3:59 PM CST, February 21, 2014

Joliet, IL –Chris Balkema, 11th Congressional District GOP candidate hosted over 75 concerned residents earlier this week to hear Erin Raasch, Director of the non-partisan “Stop Common Core Illinois” movement, explain the problems that plague the controversial, federally influenced education standards known as Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The Balkema campaign organized the event after voters approached them with their confusion, questions and concerns.

“Erin did a fantastic job of breaking down how these ‘standards’ came about, why it is not the best for our kids and teachers, and ultimately our state, given the enormous costs and other issues,” said Balkema.

ENORMOUS COSTS

CCSS began when Democratic and Republican Governors wanted to make sure kids learn the same material across the country. Two trade organizations –essentially lobbyists—wrote the standards and own the copyright to “Common Core.” They are the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). It has been estimated that The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has doled almost \$150-million to various groups to promote CCSS. Two other entities involved in writing and promoting the standards are businessman David Coleman and Achieve, Inc.

The Pioneer Institute of Boston projects that basic implementation of CCSS is \$16-billion over 7 years. This is problematic when states are strapped for revenue. Here in Illinois, the state legislature has not been consistent paying school districts because of a \$7-billion backlog in unpaid bills. Raasch estimates the cost to Illinois alone is \$733-million over 7 years, and wonders who will pay for this.

“There was no cost analysis to implement Common Core. Once the Obama stimulus runs out, it’s an unfunded mandate,” says Raasch. “Fiscally distraught states signed up for CCSS even though the standards weren’t finalized because they wanted the stimulus money.”

She outlined how in 2009 and 2010, when states were in fiscal distress after the financial troubles of 2008, the Department of Education used money from Pres. Obama’s nearly \$1-trillion stimulus package to entice states to sign up for the Common Core Standards even before they were finalized. Resolutions in both houses on Capitol Hill have denounced this “coercion”.

One graph Raasch showed from the Cato Institute made a stark contrast between costs and test results in the “school reform” movement: lines representing costs for education reforms since 1970 soar almost vertically, while test scores have remained flat.

“BASICALLY CREATING A NATIONAL STUDENT DATABASE”; "MASSIVE EXPERIMENT"

“What also concerns me is the data collection on our kids. What is going to be done with the data? Right now, all kinds of different groups will have access to it,” says Raasch. “And there are over 400 data points they collect. The Obama stimulus expanded data collection to pre-school through age 20. They are basically building a national student database. Where’s the privacy?”

“Furthermore, we have concerns when it comes to English and mathematics. For example, rather than read the classics and whole books, students read ‘excerpts’ from literature, with modern critiques, technical manuals and government documents. And in math, there is this ‘fuzzy math’, where they emphasize the process of calculating an answer, rather than getting the correct answer.”

She went on to say that Common Core is a “massive experiment, with unevaluated experimental teaching methods.”

The only two educators on the CCSS validation committee – Dr. James Milgram, Stanford University professor emeritus, and Sandra Stotsky, University of Arkansas education professor—refused to sign off on the final draft of standards.

Raasch, who used to be a data analyst and work in social science research at a major university, gave a 58-minute presentation full of valuable information.

She also emphasized how Common Core is unlawful. “He who writes the standards writes the tests. And the tests drive the curricula. The federal government influenced this, so it is in direct violation of at least 3 federal statutes which ban the federal government from influencing curricula.”

Now, voters in states across the country, especially in New York, who are angered by what is essentially top-down mandates, are pressuring legislators to either “pause” implementation, rebrand it, defund it, or write their own standards. Four states --Alaska, Texas, Wisconsin and

Virginia-- said “no thanks, we will do our own.” Now, 10-12 other states are reconsidering CCSS, including Indiana.

Here in Illinois, two Republican legislators have two bills to “pause” implementation, while Democrat State Senator William Delgado has introduced a new “student data privacy bill.”

Find more information and how to get involved at Raasch’s website, www.stopcommoncoreillinois.org .

###

Chris Balkema is a 20 year veteran of Caterpillar, serves on the Grundy County Board, and previously served the Minooka County School Board District 111. Chris earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Systems from Taylor University and a Master’s Degree in Business Administration from Bradley University. He is married to Jill, his wife of 15 years. They have two small children.Â¿

The 11th District includes Aurora, Bolingbrook, Burr Ridge, Downers Grove, Joliet, Lisle, Lockport, Naperville, New Lenox, Oswego, Plainfield, Romeoville, Shorewood.