



Local lawmakers oppose nat'l education standards

Joe Pyrah - Daily Herald | Posted: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 8:55 am

Two Utah County lawmakers with their own ideas about education independence strongly disagree with the state board of education's recent decision to subscribe to national standards.

Sen. Margaret Dayton, R-Orem, became a national figurehead in the fight against No Child Left Behind, eventually drawing all 50 states into a fight with the federal government over certain requirements. Dayton, who is against any federal involvement in education, sees last week's move to get onboard with the Common Core State Standards as the same thing.

"We're saying please reduce our locally elected school boards to clerical duties only," said Dayton, who was also opposed to the state's participation in the \$4.35 billion federal Race to the Top program that rewards innovative teaching methods.

"I'm convinced if we had a great idea that we would have already implemented it," Dayton said.

The Common Core State Standards are separate from federal funding ties that go with NCLB and Race to the Top. It was created by the National Governor's Association rather than the federal government, and its participation is touted as voluntary.

Rep. John Dougall, R-Highland, citing the Cato Institute, said the program is backward of what education reform really needs, that "there is no empirical evidence that national standards produce superior educational outcomes."

Even with the alternate approach -- using governors instead of the federal government -- Dougall sees the same nationalization of testing.

"The push for national standards isn't about improving student learning. It's about increasing national control of public education," he said.

The Associated Press reports that the idea of Common Core is to eliminate inequities in education not only among states but also among districts, meaning students transferring to a school in a different state or district should be at a similar level as their new classmates.

Independent researchers have said Utah's English standards will improve under the common standards, while Utah's math standards were recently improved and are above what Common Core calls for. The standards don't prevent Utah from putting additional standards in place that are tougher than Common Core, according to AP.

Dayton, known to run bills cracking down on education establishment, says that the state should look into whether the school board has somehow tied Utah into spending additional dollars. Several years ago -- in response to NCLB -- legislators passed a law that requires any new agreement requiring money to first be approved by the governor's office.