

## **Local View: Charter school bill a landmine for public ed**

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Sens. Tyson Larson and Lou Ann Linehan have introduced LB630, which would alter the education landscape in Nebraska substantially and not for the better ("[Charter schools testimony heated](#)," March 15). Citizens should be aware of the hidden agenda behind the push for the charter schools, which are disguised in the wording of the bill as "independent schools."

The ultraconservative Koch brothers of Wichita, who recently interfered with various legislative races in Nebraska by supporting candidates to oust those who voted against Gov. Pete Ricketts, see charter schools as a way to indoctrinate America's youth. The Koch brothers, together with their surrogate, the Cato Institute, reason that voters fail to embrace their far-right-wing agenda because public schools are filled with liberals who taint the thoughts of youth. Their solution is to create an independent education system that will teach their philosophy only.

Their agenda is being promoted both on the national level -- our new secretary of education is a big supporter of charter schools -- and now here in Nebraska and in the legislatures of other states.

Few citizens will have the time to read the text of LB630, which is 36 pages worth of legalese. Hopefully, enough citizens will make the effort to read and understand this bill and oppose its passage. The bill is poorly drafted and contains many bad provisions that create more problems than its supporters claim it will solve. If adopted in its present form, the bill will allow charter schools to shape their own subject matter and mode of teaching it without oversight by the Nebraska Department of Education.

Section 20 of the bill provides "an independent school is part of the state's system of public education except that it is exempt from all statutes, rules and regulations applicable to schools as defined in section 79-1001 unless specifically provided in the Independent Public Schools Act." Couple this with the provisions of Section 7(2) of the act, which provides that an independent school "can limit enrollment to specific grade levels or areas of focus of the school, such as mathematics, science or the arts," and you could have charter schools that do not teach history, government, social studies or political theory and produce graduates who are ignoramuses

regarding America's history and a broad spectrum of current political thought. A charter school could elect to only teach communism, Nazi philosophy or Muslim jihad.

The bill creates a separate board for independent schools that isolate them from the Nebraska State Board of Education, creating an unnecessary level of bureaucracy.

Section 17 of the act requires public school districts to provide transportation to and from the independent schools for students within the public school district. There is no provision to reimburse the public school districts for the cost of this transportation, and the additional costs may have to be absorbed by the public school district, resulting in increased school district taxes. If students from a public school district attend an independent school outside the public school district, the public school district is also required to provide transportation for such students. The reimbursement for the public school district for such cost by the independent schools is unclear. Such transportation obligation could arguably extend to athletic teams going to away games, band trips, drama groups going to contests, FFA groups going to meetings and so forth.

LB630 is a landmine which, if passed in its present form, could explode and severely damage or destroy public education in Nebraska. It is not in the best interests of Nebraska residents.

I come from a family of eight schoolteachers. I was educated in public elementary schools, public junior high, public high school and at the public University of Nebraska and the public UNL College of Law. My public education has served me well. Nebraska public education allowed me to compete successfully with others who attended colleges, public and private, in other parts of the United States.

The charter school initiative is ill-conceived and should not be passed in Nebraska in order to foster a conservative agenda. I urge Nebraska citizens to write their legislators and urge that LB630 be voted down, as has wisely been done in the eight previous legislative sessions in which it has been proposed.