



Anti-Common Core Candidates Trounce Indiana Incumbents In Primaries

By Joy Pullmann
May 8, 2014

On Tuesday, two nationally-eyed primaries here in Indiana had Tea Party challengers knocking out sitting state representatives over two major issues: National Common Core education mandates and GOP leaders' refusal to protect natural marriage despite supermajorities in both houses.

Curt Nisly and Christopher Judy beat Reps. Rebecca Kubacki and Kathy Heuer handily with 65 percent and 57 percent, respectively, of the votes tallied by [the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette's](#) press time Tuesday. Dozens of motivated moms, dads, and grandparents had spent Saturdays canvassing quiet suburban neighborhoods on Judy and Nisly's behalf, passing out flyers while wearing navy shirts that read, "Common sense, not Common Core."

Although [Politico reported](#), "Nisly and Judy both put up a major fight against the Common Core in the state and made the fight against the standards one of their top campaign issues," and Common Core has perhaps been Indiana's hottest political topic for the past year, local outlets are pretending the race's outcome is largely due, instead, to support for natural marriage. The *Indianapolis Business Journal* [didn't even mention Common Core](#) as an electoral factor. The state's flagship paper, the *Indianapolis Star*, only mentioned Common Core because a source quoted it, also [spending their story noting](#) Heuer and Kubacki's refusal to vote for amending the state constitution to define marriage as one man, one woman.

Marriage was clearly important to the challengers' teams, but Common Core was at least equal in importance. For one, Nisly filed for candidacy before either incumbent had voted against letting Indiana voters consider the marriage question. Heather Crossin and Erin Tuttle, co-founders of Hoosiers Against Common Core, had endorsed Judy and Nisly. The ladies are well-known both in-state and nationally for catalyzing the state's retreat from Common Core. Last month, Indiana became the first state to drop Common Core, albeit [for lower standards](#) because [Gov. Mike Pence insisted](#) that Common Core proponents control the rewrite. Pence had endorsed Heuer, and Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann spent Election Day greeting voters at the polls in Heuer and Kubacki's districts on the incumbents' behalf. The state Chamber of Commerce, also a huge Common Core proponent, had also backed Heuer and Kubacki.

For months, grassroots leaders at Indiana anti-Common Core meetings had highlighted primary upsets as an effective way to make the state GOP stop trivializing their objections to the Obama administration-backed national testing and curriculum mandates.

Common Core supporters are nervous about this gaining traction, as evidenced by a [new poll out last week](#). When given a pro-Common Core explanation, conservative primary voters who didn't previously know about the standards tend to support them, by 55 to 39 percent, the poll says. By a 48 percent to 36 percent margin, Republican primary voters tended to support a candidate with a positive message about Common Core instead of one charging it was "developed in secret by the Obama administration." But that's a straw man: The folks who oppose Common Core don't pretend Obama wrote them "in secret," pointed out Neal McCluskey of the Cato Institute.

"This is just slightly less egregious—and maybe that's being too kind—garbage polling than lots of the other push polls providing 'neutral' descriptions of the Core," he said. The organization that commissioned this one [receives funding from Common Core's primary sponsor](#), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. See McCluskey's [critique of other Common Core polls](#).

Another recent poll tends to reinforce the Indiana primary results. The [University of Connecticut found](#) that the more people know about Common Core, the less likely they are to support it. Of those who said they know "a great deal" about Common Core, 61 percent said it is bad policy.