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If the federal government is going to give out grants to education, why not use them to hire more teachers to reduce class sizes, extend the school day and help at-risk children? This is where money needs to be spent to improve education, not more filling in of little circles on computer cards.

*Marie Corfield, Flemington*

#### **Too many flaws**

As a New Jersey educator, I am seriously worried about the state's rash decision to "Tie teacher pay to kids' scores."

I am deeply concerned that both student achievement and teacher performance will be judged by a test that is seriously flawed itself. Anyone who thinks the state can develop a functional, cost-effective reform in a few short days should sit down and take the fifth-grade NJASK test first. The assessment materials were obviously prepared in a hurry, resulting in poorly worded questions and inaccurate directions.

I urge our state Department of Education to stop racing to the top. Slow down and think through the details of the education reform.

I am not opposed to change. I am, however, against impulsively instituting a plan whose details have not been worked out. How can we as a state submit a proposal that includes a computer program that will track quarterly achievement of students, but does not include a cost factor attached to this initiative? I find the state's hasty decision to submit a proposal for approval with significant details missing to be completely irresponsible and a potential costly disaster.

*Joanne Stanek, Fanwood*

#### **The missing link**

Whenever columnist and professional contrarian Paul Mulshine applauds anything a New Jersey politician does, it's cause for alarm. So when a recent column praised Gov. Chris Christie's decision to replace Justice John Wallace, the only African-American on the state Supreme Court, with Ann Patterson, a corporate liability lawyer, I wondered what was behind Mulshine's new-found admiration for the governor ("In court of public opinion, Sweeney did Christie a favor," May 6). Surprisingly, it wasn't at all difficult to uncover the link.

It leads straight to former Bogota mayor Steve Lonegan. Lonegan, who challenged the governor in the primary, has been conducting a campaign through his Americans for Prosperity group to force Christie to, among other things, change the court. Americans for Prosperity is just one of a long list of groups funded by New York billionaire David Koch. Koch sits on the board of The Cato Institute, a conservative think tank. So there you have it. Christie is being pushed far to the right by a guy who lost to him in the primary election, acting on behalf of Koch, a climate-change denier, and being cheered on in the media by Mulshine.

Is this really what the people in New Jersey voted for?

*Terrance J. Foyle, Bridgewater*

#### **Government oversight needed**

On May 4, The Star-Ledger ran an op-ed by Rep. Scott Garrett ("Wrong direction on financial reform") railing against consumer protection incorporated in the financial reform bill currently making its way through Congress. Garrett asserts that creating an agency designed to monitor abuse by credit card companies implies that "consumers are unable to make their own financial decisions."

Thank you, congressman. However, I just looked at the 16-page "disclosure statement" that my credit card company sent to me. After about the second page of gobbledegook, my eyes glazed over.

After all, even if I found something I really didn't like, could I do anything about it?

Credit card companies pay platoons of lawyers and public relations experts to put together "agreements" that provide the companies with the most extensive rights that the law allows while couching them in the least pernicious terms. I wonder if the \$1 million Garrett has received from financial interests in the past few years has anything to do with his aversion to this and other consumer protection legislation.

I, for one, would really like it if there was a government agency looking over these artfully conceived and presented take-it-or-leave-it "agreements" to give me at least an even chance of not getting screwed when the chips are down.

*Michael G. Busche, Sparta*

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