



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on March 16, 2022

Caught Lying: Members Did Not Even Know of Virginia Association of School Superintendents Letter Urging Youngkin to Reverse Course on CRT

In response to Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin's executive order banning Critical Race Theory from being taught in Virginia's public schools, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) sent the newly elected governor an excoriating and condemning letter "on behalf" of the association's 133 members who are public-school leaders. The problem? Those members were not consulted first.

VASS — a membership group for school superintendents — sent the letter last Thursday. In the letter, VASS demanded that Youngkin cancel a tip line the administration created for concerned parents to report "inherently defined divisive concepts" being taught in schools. The letter accuses Youngkin of making "gross assumptions" on the state of public education in Virginia. The letter states:



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Division superintendents disagree with your having rescinded much of the Ed Equity work by the Department of Education. This work had been completed by many quality educators over a number of years to provide support for the success of children in underserved communities and in select population groups.

The letter goes on to say:

Division superintendents disagree with your using "equitable outcomes" as the basis for determining what divisive concepts are and unilaterally suggesting that this approach is discriminatory.

The letter was reported by mainstream media and given utter credibility. The *Richmond Times Dispatch* reported in a way that made it appear that the letter was from all 133 members expressing their disagreement with Youngkin's policy and pleading with him to reverse course. The *Washington Post* came right out and said as much. Under the headline, "[All 133 Virginia school superintendents urge Youngkin to scrap tip line, effort to root out policies deemed 'divisive,'](#)" the *Post* reported, "All 133 of Virginia's public school division superintendents have urged Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) to scrap the 'tip line' set up to let parents complain about teachers and principals and have asked him to stop his



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crusade against the teaching of 'divisive' content in schools."

There are several problems with both the letter and the mainstream media's reporting on it. The main issue is that the whole stunt was a lie wrapped up in another lie. Because as Richmond ABC affiliate 7News [reported](#) Monday, "the state's 133 superintendents were not advised of the letter before it was sent to the Governor's administration." In fact, "Virginia Association of School Superintendents Executive Director Ben Kiser told 7News the letter was written and approved by a board that consists of 12 members."

So, while the letter was sent "on behalf" of all 133 members of VASS and was reported on in such a way as to give the impression that it expressed the sentiments of all 133 members, it was, in fact, approved by merely 12 of them. That is a more-than 90 percent exaggeration. Another word for that would be "lie."

As Youngkin told 7News, "This letter is a gross misrepresentation of what superintendents believe, I believe," adding:

It's my understanding that in fact there was not a vote, this was a board of an association that wrote a letter and mischaracterized the support they had for that letter. I think that's wrong. This is what these associations are trying to do: which is again put bureaucracy, put politicians, in between parents and their children. This is why Virginians elected me in the fall. This is why we went to work on day one and on day one we reaffirmed the rights of parents to make these decisions. I believe this letter does not represent 133 superintendents, and I'll say just last week I was at the state championships for high school basketball class six all the way down to class one in Richmond men and women teams. It was so much fun. And I had superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, students, coming up to us in droves thanking us for the work we are doing on behalf of students and behalf of parents.

Youngkin has the facts on his side for that assessment, because some of those 133 Virginia superintendents told 7News that the first time they heard about VASS's letter to the governor was when media reported on it. As 7News reported:

"It was a surprise to read a letter that presumed my agreement in the Washington Post as reported through various news sources," a Virginia superintendent said. "I think several of the superintendents in the state were a little surprised that we were attributed to something that we had not seen. It's a little bit of pot calling the kettle black when the letter that was written to the State Superintendent was very critical of the process when in fact there was no process by the State's superintendent association to loop in its membership."

Another Virginia Superintendent told 7News that had the state's superintendent association made it clear it was their board of directors issuing the letter, there wouldn't be an issue. The problem was that the VASS letter characterized that all 133 supported the content of the letter, the superintendent said.

"I was not made aware of the letter prior to it being sent and I would say I'd certainly appreciate it being consulted with prior to the letter going out indicating a representation of my - and along with my colleagues across the commonwealth's - views," the superintendent



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said. “If there is a letter going out on my behalf I would certainly appreciate and expect to know exactly what that letter says before its being distributed.”

But this is par for the course. Late last year, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) sent a letter to the Biden administration requesting the federal government investigate threats and violence against school-board members all over the United States. That letter compared concerned parents to terrorists and was written to give the impression that its 90,000 members (made up of elected school-board officials around the United States) were urging [Biden to protect them](#). Except that was a lie. And it cost NSBA dearly. At least 21 state affiliates have severed ties with the group — and some are even considering establishing a competitor. And [at least 29 states have distanced themselves from the NSBA’s letter](#). That should make it obvious that the letter was not representative of the organization’s membership, though it was sent in their names. [NSBA removed the letter from its website](#) and [issued a simpering apology that didn’t actually admit any fault](#). But the apology was too little, too late. The damage was done.

But VASS appears to have missed that lesson, issuing a letter “on behalf” of its 133 members, when it was actually only approved by 12 radicals who sit at the helm. And with an assist from the mainstream media, VASS created — if only for a moment — the impression that the letter was worth the paper and ink (or pixels) it took to write it.



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