



Common Core: People vs. Big Government, Big Business, and Billionaires

With recent public hearings on national [Common Core](#) education standards by Wisconsin lawmakers in October, another element of the national battle is becoming increasingly obvious: This has become a fight largely between concerned citizens and parents on one side, with Big Business, Big Government, and a cadre of establishment billionaires like Bill Gates on the other. This week, efforts of pro-Common Core forces to demonize the grassroots opposition — which transcends the traditional political spectrum — reached the point of absurdity. Citizens and even lawmakers, though, are now hitting back at bizarre and inaccurate allegations made in an apparent effort to dismiss public concerns about the nationalized standards.



Supporters of Common Core who testified at the Wisconsin hearings were, for the most part at least, paid by taxpayers through government education bureaucracies. Those state and local agencies, of course, received [taxpayer-funded bribes from the Obama administration](#) to adopt the controversial standards in the first place. Other Common Core backers have been receiving funds from big businesses hoping to profit at taxpayer expense, or grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation — the key financier behind the whole education “reform” agenda, in addition to its support for abortion giant Planned Parenthood, the United Nations, [population control](#), and other controversial causes.

On the other side of the debate were everyday Wisconsinites — moms, dads, grandparents, educators, liberal and conservative activists, taxpayers, and more. In an effort to counter the one-sided testimony from well-funded Common Core proponents, citizens across Wisconsin came together to help raise money and bring in experts to testify against the standards. Passing around a hat at meetings, the grassroots activists and concerned parents worked hard to gather small- and medium-sized donations simply to help reimburse some of the nation’s top authorities on Common Core for their travel expenses — flights, hotel stays, and a few meals; nothing more.

Instead of recognizing the concerns and applauding the people of Wisconsin for working together to benefit their children, however, some lawmakers concocted wild conspiracy theories and outright falsehoods in an effort to smear opponents. In a [“resignation letter”](#) to the state committee investigating Common Core, Democrat State Rep. Christine Sinicki claimed the legislative hearings were “primarily a roadshow” done in conjunction with the Republican National Committee “to distract from that party’s recent national failures.”

Claiming that the criticisms of Common Core in Wisconsin “echo the [extreme statements coming out of the RNC](#),” she alleged that the “extremism” about the standards seemed to emanate from the “Tea



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Party wing” of the GOP. It was not immediately clear how state Rep. Sinicki could claim to know that, since she barely heard 10 percent of the testimony and failed to show up for three out of four hearings. However, if she had paid more attention, she would almost certainly be aware of the fact that countless teachers, progressives, and educators oppose the standards just as firmly as conservatives.

One of the most remarkable elements of the opposition, in fact, is how it spans across the entire political spectrum and obliterates traditional partisan divides. “Never have I found myself finding so much common ground with people who call themselves conservative and libertarians — we all agreed public schools were going to be ruined by this,” Dr. Mark Naison, a professor at Fordham University and [co-founder of a fast-growing teachers’ alliance opposed to Common Core](#), told *The New American*. “This really represents the worst fantasies of both the right and left coming true: Big Government and Big Corporations imposing this terrible, untested, expensive plan using intimidation and bullying.”

State Rep. Sinicki, though, apparently has not been listening, suggesting in her factually challenged letter that the massive public outrage surrounding Common Core was somehow being drummed up by the RNC along with “another extreme and very rich ally ... the national John Birch Society (JBS), which is conveniently headquartered here in Wisconsin.” She added: “Each of the [Select Committee on Common Core Standards] informational hearings have featured speakers suggested to the SCCCS chairs by the JBS, and whose travel expenses from distant parts of the country have been paid for by the American Opinion Foundation (AOF), a proud arm of the Birch Society.”

At least one major media outlet joined in, too, running a mostly accurate story about the conspiracy theories under the incorrect headline, “[Common Core standards debate heats up over payments by John Birch group](#).” Among the various factual problems with the headline: the AOF is not a “John Birch group,” it is a legally distinct entity not owned by anyone. Nor did it make any “payments” for anything. AOF Executive Director Alan Scholl explained the situation in comments to *The New American*.

“A few of the out-of-state speakers’ expenses were reimbursed by collections taken up by citizens unassociated with JBS, and AOF was simply asked to consolidate them, tally them, and issue checks to the speakers for limited expenses,” Scholl explained, noting that about \$5,500 of the \$6,000 had been raised and distributed to reimburse, not pay, the speakers. “This was actually begun at a gathering of a number of conservative groups in the Fox Valley region of Wisconsin, where the idea of bringing in qualified experts to counter the partisan Department of Public Instruction employees testimony, and a hat was literally passed among the group.”

On the other side of the debate, taxpayers footed the bill for pro-Common Core witnesses, he continued. “By contrast, literally many dozens of Department of Public Instruction employees took full days at each of the events, with pay, and came long distances,” Scholl noted. “Many were ranking bureaucrats, likely with hefty salaries. I would estimate over 100 in all. I haven’t done the math, but their salaries, along with substitute teachers on school days, travel and all are a huge sum.”

For perspective, Scholl said that at the Fond du Lac hearings, for example, “all of the 78 anti-Common Core speakers listed were there of their own volition, and the 12 pro-Common Core witnesses were all DPI or public education employees.” In Madison, he estimated that there were likely more than 50 government-education employees. At the Eau Claire hearings, a local college professor even “sent his entire class in to sign slips at the hearing during class time in favor of Common Core.”

Another fact that has been pointed out by more than a few Common Core critics: At the Wausau hearing, pro-Common Core forces’ primary witness was Michael Petrilli, executive director of the



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Fordham Institute, which he said paid for his expenses. The organization, of course, has received national grants to do Common Core work. In 2009 alone, the self-styled “right of center” outfit received \$1 million from the Gates foundation. Since then, it has received many millions more, Gates records show.

This week during testimony at the hearings in Wausau, multiple witnesses told lawmakers that they had contributed funds to help reimburse experts who came to speak out against Common Core — even giving the donations hat to Democrat State Sen. John Lehman, who continually “droned on” about who paid opposition speakers while refusing to mention the salaries of government bureaucrats. One woman who testified against Common Core on October 30, for instance, told the committee that she donated \$13 to help bring some experts in. “I am not a member of any right-wing organization,” the woman testified.

Right after that, another woman spoke. “There’s more of that huge beast that we do not see,” she explained about the standards and everything that comes with them, adding that they were conjured up and developed “behind closed doors” in secret. “Common Core was bought and paid for primarily by the Gates Foundation.” The National Education Association teachers union, she added, received a grant, “and now its website is an advertisement for Common Core.” She also pointed to massive education publishing companies such as Pearson that are hoping to rake in huge taxpayer-funded profits as a result of Common Core.

Then there are everyday people like her trying to fight back. “I’m offended, because I am merely a citizen, and I shouldn’t be allowed to put money in a hat, as you have been told repeatedly, to bring in an expert to support my views,” she complained. “I think I have the right. I am not a member of the John Birch [Society], and the way you talked about John Birch, you are trying to ridicule the people who support what I believe.”

Finally, citizen activist Ed Perkins took the stand. “Let me point out to you that the Fordham Institute received \$1 million for individuals like Mr. Petrilli to go around this country to promote Common Core,” Perkins told the committee before uncovering even larger Gates grants to the institute. “You have, in my words, attacked some of us for coming here and bringing other people here [with money] out of our own pockets — not from an organization like the Fordham Institute. That angers me.”

Among the experts who were brought in to speak against Common Core with citizen donations were the two education experts on the Common Core Validation Committee, both of whom refused to sign off on them. Perkins was clearly upset about the half-baked attempt to smear concerned citizens and experts while belittling the grassroots opposition. “You have besmirched people by saying we are part of some radical organization,” he continued. “That, you should have never done in your capacity as a senator who is here to serve people.”

In a November 1 letter, Perkins continued tearing apart the attacks on citizens’ efforts. “Our goal in determining to raise the travel funds for these respected and informed individuals was to help provide information on [Common Core] that we believed was not known to Wisconsin legislators, taxpayers, and parents,” he wrote. “We raised money only for plane fare and modest accommodations if needed — no expert we assisted was reimbursed for their time in any way, nor was their testimony remunerated. ... At no time did AOF [American Opinion Foundation] do anything but manage the donations of parents, grandparents, and other citizens.”

“It is David and Goliath — our tiny little sum against the Gates Foundation’s millions; the efforts of



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concerned parents, grandparents and other concerned citizens against a supremely wealthy foundation that has busily been buying a path forward for CCSS [Common Core State Standards] over the past few years,” he continued, pointing to tens of millions of dollars handed out by the Gates Foundation to promote the standards in recent years. “Yet, somehow, we, along with Alan Scholl and AOF (and by association JBS), which functioned as nothing more than a bank for the collection and disbursement of our modest funds, are painted as the suspicious characters, the extremists...the bad guys. Those advancing CCSS in this state must have a lot to hide to engage in tactics of this nature. We don’t.”

In his testimony, Perkins also pointed to legal experts and state law to show that citizens and lawmakers do indeed have the authority to stop Common Core. Tony Evers, superintendent of public instruction for the state of Wisconsin, [claimed](#): “I think the legislature’s ability to derail this is somewhat limited” and “I believe the constitution of the state gives me that authority” to mandate education standards. That notion, however, appears to be grossly mistaken, according to Perkins and the legal sources he cited. “Mr. Evers is suffering from hubris,” he said, calling on the government-education boss to “have a little humility.”

Leaders of the state Common Core committee investigating the standards said the hearings were helpful, but [lashed out](#) at state Rep. Sinicki — the legislator who resigned after failing to show up to hearings — for her inappropriate behavior and efforts to marginalize the concerns of the people of Wisconsin. In a letter to the Democrat lawmaker, for example, state Sen. Paul Farrow [wrote](#) that “it has become painstakingly clear that you care very little about hearing from concerned citizens of Wisconsin on this important issue.”

“The citizens of Wisconsin deserve to be heard by thoughtful legislators who are interested in finding ways to improve education throughout Wisconsin,” Farrow added. “As we construct our report I am hopeful that your Assembly leadership will fill your position with a thoughtful and hardworking legislator that will take this task seriously.” He also defended the right of citizens and organizations to help recruit experts to testify. Common Core “has been in the middle of a national conversation,” state Sen. Farrow said, pointing out that powerful out-of-state labor unions were involved in recent Wisconsin political debates as well.

Common Core experts whose travel and lodging expenses were paid through citizen donations included Dr. Sandra Stotsky, a former professor who refused to sign off on the English standards as part of the validation committee. She previously [told](#) *The New American* that she is not opposed to national standards *per se*, just the inadequate ones offered under Common Core. “They were written hastily by people who didn’t care how poorly written they were so long as informational text was about 50 percent of the reading curriculum,” she explained.

Another expert who testified and was reimbursed by citizens was Stanford Prof. James Milgram, another member of the validation committee. He refused to approve the math standards, citing, among other concerns, incorrect math. The other three experts who testified were Dr. Gary Thompson with the Early Life Child Psychology and Education Center, former U.S. Education Department official Ze’ev Wurman, and Ted Rebarber, founder of the education-centered non-profit organization AccountabilityWorks.

Of course, what is going on in Wisconsin is hardly unique. All across the country, citizens’ [extremely serious concerns about Common Core](#), which are [growing louder by the day](#), are being mocked by out-of-touch officials, lobbyists, and well-funded operatives on the dole of taxpayers, big business, and big government-supporting billionaires. Gates alone has spent upwards of \$150 million pushing and



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developing the scheme. The Obama administration has handed out billions more in taxpayer funds to bribe state governments into compliance with the agenda.

However, as outrage about the nationalization and dumbing down of education continues to grow nationwide in tandem with awareness of Common Core, citizens in [some areas](#) are making progress. Some 45 states have already adopted the scheme, but across America, parents and educators are working hard to restore local control and improve education by stopping the controversial national standards. Analysts expect that to accelerate in the coming months.

What will happen next in the Wisconsin battle is not yet entirely clear. Lawmakers will prepare recommendations and possibly develop legislation, but the fate of Common Core remains far from certain. Despite the power and money behind the agenda though, activists are hopeful that with continued public pressure, progress can be made toward defeating standards. The future of American children and the nation itself literally depend on the outcome of these fights.

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