



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 3, 2016

Congress Plotting to Psychologically Profile Children

After passing [an Obama-backed education bill that undermines parental rights and state and local control over schools](#) under the guise of making every student “succeed,” Congress is plotting its next unconstitutional “education” scheme: a bill to fund psychological testing and profiling of your child, and the data-mining to go with it. Under the scheme, which already sailed through the U.S. Senate late last year, schools would vacuum up huge amounts of data on students, including information on their “social and emotional learning,” attitudes, values, beliefs, and more.



That data will then be shared with basically everyone, including Big Brother in Washington, D.C., and all of his cronies. The measure will also be exploited to help the federal government figure out what works when it comes to indoctrination and transforming the minds of children, proponents of the legislation hope. Critics, however, blasting the scheme as dangerous “child abuse,” are working to kill the radical [S. 227 bill](#) in the House of Representatives.

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The legislation, dubbed [Strengthening Education Through Research Act](#), or SETRA, purports to re-authorize and fund an array of expired unconstitutional Bush-era federal programs under the Education Sciences Reform Act. The Senate SETRA bill was shepherded through with “unanimous consent” and no recorded vote by Republican Senator and former U.S. Education Secretary Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, one of the key figures behind the Orwellian Obama-backed monstrosity known as the “[Every Student Succeeds Act](#)” (ESSA). Along with other establishment Republicans, Alexander conspired with the Obama administration, [as they bragged later](#), to [cement Common Core in place nationwide and shred parental rights with the unconstitutional ESSA statute](#). All the while, Alexander and others pretended that the bill restored state and local control over education. While the new SETRA scheme passed easily in the Senate, the legislation is currently being held up in the House amid a massive public outcry surrounding privacy rights, parental rights, and other concerns.

Under the bill, the anti-constitutional federal “education” bureaucracy, which Ronald Reagan promised to abolish but never did, would devour more than \$3 billion in taxpayer money on the “research,” according to the [Congressional Budget Office](#). Among the various schemes funded in the bill are “grants” for state governments to build more databases to house your children’s most personal information, known as “longitudinal data systems.” The legislation also funds a series of national tests. In particular, the bill aims to finance “education” research, much of it dealing with children’s subjective emotions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and other elements of what is known as the “affective” domain. As this magazine reported in February, due to efforts of the establishment and the federal government, [Big Brother is now literally trying to get inside your child’s head](#).

So far, the most outrage on SETRA appears to have been triggered by sections 132 and 157 of the bill,



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which, among other concerns, expand federal “education” research into what is known as “social and emotional learning,” or SEL. Rather than focusing on academic knowledge — reading, writing, math, and so on: basically the areas parents expect their children to be learning — SEL branches into the values held by a child. If approved, that section of SETRA “will result in cultivating government-approved thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in children,” reads a [warning](#) posted by the Florida Stop Common Core Coalition, which opposes the bill. “This already seems to be happening with Common Core and Competency Based Learning. The government has no constitutional, statutory, or moral right to collect data on any of these highly personal aspects of our children’s lives. Schools should instill academic knowledge, not explore matters rightly left to family and place of worship.”

One of the leaders of the group, Dr. Karen Effrem, has been speaking out on the issue for years. “Parents are expected to submit their children to this kind of government profiling and psychological experimentation with no explanation, no way to express concern, [and no way to] opt their children out,” Dr. Effrem, a pediatrician and the president of Education Liberty Watch, was quoted as saying. Under SETRA, parents are left without any way to “see the federally mandated assessments or to find out what private, sensitive psychological data was collected on their children as part of some online assessment and shared with some third-party vendor without their consent.” In a brief phone interview with *The New American*, she said it was critical that parents get involved in the fight to protect their children from this sort of government overreach.

In the handout urging parents to demand that the bill be ended, the Florida Stop Common Core Coalition warned that SETRA is “a dangerous bill that allows the federal government to research and collect data on our children’s most sensitive psychological makeup.” Members of Congress are warned in the document that a vote for SETRA is a vote for “dangerous psychological profiling of our children,” and that parents will not forget how their elected representatives vote on the bill. “This is nothing less than governmental child abuse,” it added. “This is a federal data mining and psychological profiling bill that will further endanger our children’s privacy and freedom of thought.” The education-focused coalition, which includes dozens of liberty-minded organizations, also warned that SEL data was notoriously hard to measure, and that even prominent experts in the field have warned against using it for the purposes that government is pushing.

At the national level, Robert Holland, a senior fellow for education policy with the non-partisan Heartland Institute, also slammed the implications of the legislation in a recent column lambasting Uncle Sam for trying to become “Uncle Shrink” to America’s children. “In plain language, this means the government will assess children every single step (or crawl) of the way, from cradle to career, to be certain they acquire all the attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions the omniscient, omnipotent government deems they must have,” Holland warned, highlighting some of the most troubling implications of the bill. “Uncle Shrink approves, but what about U.S. parents? Are they ready to let the government assume their child-rearing responsibilities?”

Already, he cautioned, millions of children at school, including preschoolers, are being subjected to “various psychology-focused educational components that have been implanted in federal education legislation over the past decade.” Under SETRA, and the recently approved ESSA, it is only going to get worse. “This kind of subjective probing of children’s attitudes, beliefs, and behavior amounts to psychological profiling that (thanks to electronic dossiers) could haunt an individual throughout a lifetime,” Holland warned.

Other voices in education sounding the alarm included American Principles in Action (APIA). “If SETRA



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passes in its current form, the federal government will be empowered to expand psychological profiling of our children,” explained APIA senior fellows Jane Robbins and Emmett McGroarty in a column published last month. “Parents must understand this threat so they can mobilize to stop it.... SETRA would go beyond merely wasting money and plunge the government into an area it has no constitutional, statutory, or moral right to invade: the psychological makeup of children.” The two also warned House members that a vote for SETRA as it now stands was a vote for psychologically profiling innocent children. “It will be unforgivable if they vote for SETRA,” they added, echoing the concerns of numerous education activists, experts, and researchers trying to kill the bill.

Also extraordinarily troubling to critics is that under section 157 of SETRA, all of that data on your children will be fed into interlinked state and federal databases, and tracked from “early childhood” through to the adult years. “Subjective governmental analysis of children’s thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors should NEVER be fed into a longitudinal system that will potentially follow them for the rest of their lives,” the anti-Common Core coalition said, adding that language pretending to prohibit national databases was phony. The potential for abuse is massive. And even in the exceedingly unlikely event that the government does not end up abusing it, all of that data could easily be stolen by hackers, foreign governments, identity thieves, criminals, and more.

Lawmakers have already exposed the danger to privacy posed by the U.S. Department of Education and its lawless data-gathering and -mining schemes. Earlier this year, House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) warned that a breach of the Education Department’s systems would make the 2015 hack of the Office of Personnel Management seem like nothing. “Almost half of America’s records are sitting at the Department of Education,” Chaffetz was quoted as saying. “I think ultimately that’s going to be the largest data breach that we’ve ever seen in the history of our nation.” The department received an F on a federal score card ranking for data security, and its Inspector General found “widespread deficiencies” in cybersecurity.

The bill does have some supporters, however. Among them are the Big Government-promoting neocons at the American Enterprise Institute. Pretending to speak for the “right,” the group expressed confusion over why the “bipartisan” scheme is being held up in the House. “After all, even principled conservatives skeptical of federal involvement in education can see a role for Washington when it comes to research, and one that is entirely consistent with the genius of American government,” claimed Frederick Hess, director of education policy studies at AEI, in a column that virtually nobody read. Other SETRA backers include the Data Quality Campaign funded by [Common Core financier Bill Gates](#), which essentially wants government to collect all data on everyone, along with one of the [key lobbying groups behind Common Core, the so-called Council of Chief State School Officers](#).

Perhaps none of that is surprising considering trends in education and data-gathering at the national and even global level. As part of the [United Nations Agenda 2030, the UN’s road-map to global tyranny, the “dictators’ club” wants as much data as possible on everything, including education](#). The UN’s education agency, UNESCO, is also [working with the Obama administration as its “global partner” in “cradle to career” education reform](#), seeking to [transform and standardize the attitudes and values of children worldwide, as its ringleaders openly admit in speeches](#) and on their websites. Big Data will be crucial to all of that.

It will also be a critical component of “education” in the future, explained Knewton boss Jose Ferreira, who according to the U.S. Education Department “collects millions of data points about student users” via his partnership with the Common Core-profiteering publishing giant Pearson. “The human race is



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about to enter a totally data-mined existence.... The world in 30 years is going to be unrecognizably data mined,” Ferreira [explained at an Orwellian “Education Datapalooza” confab hosted by](#) the Obama administration’s increasingly lawless education bureaucracy. “Education happens to be today the world’s most data-minable industry, by far.”

Ferreira’s outfit, “Knewton,” gathers five to ten million “actionable data per student per day,” he said, boasting of using “the science of psychometrics to cascade out hundreds of other data.” The company has more data on students than “any company has about anybody else about anything, and it’s not even close.” In the 2012 talk, he boasted that the scheme would ensnare hundreds of millions of children in the coming years. Eventually, projecting the lines suggests that, without concerted action to stop it, the future will be Orwellian beyond anything George Orwell could have imagined in his wildest dreams.

If the federal government is not restrained, the end result will be disaster on a national and even planetary scale. As a first essential step, parents must protect their own children from this sort of abuse. That means removing them from the clutches of federally controlled government schools and either seeking out a well-vetted private or Christian school, or homeschooling. After that, parents, taxpayers, and educators should rise up and demand that Washington, D.C., stop [lawlessly dumbing down](#) and psychologically profiling students. America’s future is literally at stake.

Alex Newman is a correspondent for The New American, covering economics, education, politics, and more, and co-author of [Crimes of the Educators](#). He can be reached at anewman@thenewamerican.com. Follow him on Twitter [@ALEXNEWMAN_JOU](#).

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