



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 7, 2014

New York Revolts Against Common Core

The deeply controversial nationalized education scheme known as “[Common Core](#),” pushed by the Obama administration and billionaire Bill Gates, is under major pressure in the establishment-stronghold state of New York. With parents, teachers, unions, and political leaders from across the political spectrum in open revolt, some analysts even say that the widely criticized school standards may be on the verge of being scrapped — a development that would represent a massive blow to the ongoing imposition of Common Core nationwide.



Now, after listening to an outraged public in a series of 11 forums held across New York, state lawmakers are getting ready to file a bill that would slam the brakes on the scheme. In a phone interview with *The New American*, New York State Assemblyman Al Graf, a member of the Assembly Education Committee, explained that the coalition of legislators had no choice but to take action to stop the “disaster” that Common Core has foisted on the state. “This is state-sponsored child abuse,” he said.

The legislation, set to be introduced next week in both chambers, would impose a three-year moratorium on the standards. It would also create a committee with all relevant stakeholders, who would study the issue and then come up with recommendations: Either ditch Common Core entirely, or create new state standards that would conform to the national scheme pushed by Washington. “For now, it stops the abuse of our children,” explained the Republican lawmaker, a former police officer who has a degree in elementary education.

“We listened to teachers and parents and engaged in a conversation to find out what was going on with the implementation of Common Core,” Graf said about the 11 public hearings on Common Core held by lawmakers. “This has been a total mommy movement, where moms are seeing the effect on their children and standing up and saying ‘we’re not going to let you do this.’ ” Throughout the hearings, he said, parents and educators spoke out firmly against Common Core.

Among other problems with the controversial standards, Graf cited wildly inappropriate material, massive costs, the devastating impact on teachers and students, and more. “If you wanted to destroy public education, this is what you would do,” he said. “Teaching is a skill. Teaching is an art form. What they are doing here is turning teachers into hall monitors.”

Indeed, teachers and educators have now openly revolted against Common Core. In late January, the board of the New York state teachers union voted unanimously against the standards as they have been implemented so far, representing a devastating blow to the whole scheme. The powerful 600,000-member strong union also voted unanimously for the removal of New York Education Commissioner John King Jr., a fervent advocate of Common Core who critics say refuses to listen to an outraged public.



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“We’ll have to be the first to say it’s failed,” New York State United Teachers President Richard Iannuzzi was [quoted as saying](#) about the implementation of Common Core. “We’ve been in conversations where we’re all saying our members don’t see this going down a path that improves teaching and learning. We’re struggling with how to deal with it.”

Assemblyman Graf said that during testimony from parents and educators, it became clear that the imposition of Common Core had been a total failure — with terrible consequences for teachers, students, schools, and parents. The Common Core modules for New York, for example, are “filled with grammatical errors and haven’t even been edited,” Graf said. “It would be better to call this the un-Common Core, nothing is consistent.”

The material is often highly inappropriate, the lawmaker continued. “Explain to me why a first grader has to point out ancient Mesopotamia on a globe or explain their contributions to modern civilization — they’re six,” Graf said, citing a broad range of examples illustrating that the controversial standards appear to have been poorly thought out — at the very least. “But you know there are a lot of people making money on all this.”

The report issued after the forums was also sharply critical. “The rollout of Common Core has been a failure,” the document states bluntly. “Members of the Assembly Minority Conference, after hearing the passionate testimony of parents, students, teachers, and administrators from across the state, find that we must put the brakes on the modules and testing, and overhaul Common Core using teacher and expert input, or remove the standards altogether.”

Graf, who represents a Long Island district, also told *The New American* that Common Core fails to take into account children with disabilities. One special-education teacher who spoke out during the forums held across New York, for example, told lawmakers about the disasters she has experienced under the new education scheme. The kids were being tested on material they never learned and, sitting still for 90 minutes to take the new tests, were deeply confused. One distraught child was even caught stabbing himself with a pencil under the desk during the test.

“She was breaking into tears testifying about this,” Graf said about the special-education teacher who shared the story. “I have parents pouring their hearts out telling me how their kids are coming home and don’t want to go to school anymore. I have kids that loved math and now hate math.” Some teachers who testified, knowing that they could be putting their careers in jeopardy, told lawmakers that they just “couldn’t sit there and let them do this to these children.”

Graf and other lawmakers said that the new status quo could no longer be allowed to continue — hence the legislative efforts to stop Common Core. “I’m not going to sit down and go quietly into the night,” the assemblyman said. “If there is one thing that I can do in my political career — if there’s one accomplishment I can make — it’s going to be to protect these kids.”

The new bill to halt Common Core co-sponsored by Graf will be filed next week in the New York Senate by state Sen. Lee Zeldin, another champion of education. “It is a major issue in my Senate District,” he said in a statement. “Securing a delay remains my top education priority.” In the Assembly, Ranking Minority Education Committee Member Assemblyman Ed Ra will be the chief sponsor.

“We’ve been working night and day on this bill,” Graf said, noting that the testimony of outraged parents and teachers was at the heart of the effort. “It’s been six months in the making.” While there are strong vested interests seeking to keep Common Core in place — all of the companies and individuals hoping to profit from it, as well as state officials receiving massive federal handouts for



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compliance — Graf is confident that the public outcry has been heard loud and clear.

Five months ago, Graf and other lawmakers introduced a bill to completely repeal Common Core and stop the federal “Race to the Top” bribes used to prod state governments into adopting the controversial standards. “This gave people something to rally behind,” Graf said, noting that the uproar has only grown since then. “We started a giant conversation. People all over the state started calling their legislators.”

At this point, even Democrats, under heavy pressure from their constituencies, have started speaking out about Common Core. Top leaders from both chambers, while not yet calling for scrapping the standards entirely, are already seeking delays in Common Core-aligned testing and are calling on state education officials to “alleviate the concerns of parents, teachers and other educators.” Citing major privacy fears, top Democrats are also seeking to delay the [massive student data collection demanded by Washington](#).

“I don’t think they have a choice” but to support delaying and possibly ending Common Core, Graf said, referring to Democrats in the legislature facing a tsunami of public outrage. “They’re trying to appease people, but it’s not going to work,” he said. “It’s like putting a Band-Aid on a gaping wound. I’m going to rip the Band-Aid off and stick my finger in the hole until they start paying attention.”

The [national Common Core standards](#), developed and promoted with funding from U.S. taxpayers and special interests, have been among the key elements in Obama’s broader education agenda. Even experts on the Common Core Validation Committee refused to sign off on them. Still, the scheme was quietly foisted on 45 state governments using a combination of what lawmakers and critics call federal “bribes” and mandates.

However, with the widely criticized standards coming under attack from across the political spectrum and the nation, advocates for high-quality education and local control still believe the scheme can be stopped. Numerous states and school districts have slammed the brakes on Common Core already. With New York on the verge of potentially backing out, the whole plot to nationalize education using dubious standards could come crashing down sooner than even optimistic critics imagine.

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