



MANDATORY KINDERGARTEN: UNNECESSARY, INTRUSIVE AND EXPENSIVE

ISSUE: SB 409 will lower the mandatory age for school attendance from 7 to 5, requiring parents to enroll their 5 and 6-year-olds in school or face truancy charges.

An estimated 95 percent of the Illinois' population of five and 6-year-olds is currently enrolled in voluntary kindergarten. SB 409 will increase the burden on teachers and school administrators who are already struggling with heavy unfunded state mandates.

WHY SB 409 should be opposed:

- **It is unnecessary.**

PROPONENTS of requiring 5 and 6-year-olds to attend kindergarten have offered no evidence that earlier compulsory school attendance raises test scores or improves academic excellence.

In reverse, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) of 1999 and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) of 2000 showed that mandating school at a very young age did not significantly improve subsequent academic performance.

In recent comparisons, Illinois' National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and mathematics scores fared better than four of eight states who require children to attend school at age 5 -- Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Arkansas. The other four state's scores were equal to or just slightly higher than Illinois'.

- **It interferes with parents' rights to make one of the first crucial decisions affecting their child's education.**

CHILDREN mature at different rates and the ages between 5 and 7 are crucial years that can determine a child's overall academic success.

The vast majority of parents already send their children to kindergarten voluntarily, without the threat of truancy charges.

- **It will add at least \$17 million to the state's financial burden.**

Four years ago, the LRB suggested that lowering compulsory school attendance by two years would cost the state \$17 million.

At a time when the state's budget is cash-strapped, this additional expenditure is unnecessary.

OPPONENTS: Illinois School Management Alliance, Illinois Family Institute, Concerned Women for America, Eagle Forum, Christian Home Educators Coalition, Home School Legal Defense Association and Family Taxpayers Network.

Concerned Women for America is the nation's largest public policy women's organization.

**CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA
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