

SENATE EDUCATION  
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BILL NO. SR-291

**TESTIMONY OF KEITH SIMMONS REGARDING SB291**  
February 14, 2005 Before the Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee

Senator Ryan and Senate Education Committee Members,

It is with a great deal of respect for you and your responsibilities that I address you this afternoon. I am for the record here in opposition to SB291 which I regard as a serious threat to parental authority and to the cause of liberty itself.

I am a home schooling father of eight children. I have been married for 29 years to my wife Nancy and a father for 23 years. Our eldest daughter, Karissa, has just made me a grandfather and is now, with her husband's love and support, home schooling her baby girl. My second born daughter graduated from our home school last year and is now happily married. We have successfully established a tradition of responsible home education in our family that will be carried on for generations to come. We have put the "new wine" into "new wine bottles" that both may be preserved.<sup>1</sup>

We are currently teaching the remainder of our children (ages 3 to 16) at home. Though we work and earn money to help pay for the public school, our family has never cost the public school system one dime. Neither have we burdened the legal system by raising troubled youths. In short, we are a part of the solution, not the problem.

In my life, it was not always this way. I was not raised in a Christian home. My education came from the secular humanist point of view commonly found in public schools. I and my two brothers were definitely troubled and rebellious youths. With no real moral or spiritual foundation other than the "If it feels good, do it" philosophy, we drifted with others on the sinking sand of human opinion. We caused many problems for ourselves and others.

In 1976 however, I heard the old, old story of the Lord Jesus Christ, his sinless life, his substitutionary death on the cross and glorious resurrection. For the first time, I understood God's love for me and the purpose for which he created me. I received Jesus Christ as my Savior and I was born again. This experience profoundly altered my character and thinking forever.

When that happened, I was given new life in Christ.<sup>2</sup> The Bible says, "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."<sup>3</sup> Truly all things became new. My thinking changed and so did my behavior. The psalmist said, "And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."<sup>4</sup> I put off the vain traditions received from my fathers<sup>5</sup> and ". . .

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<sup>1</sup> No man putteth a piece of **new** cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put **new** wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put **new** wine into **new** bottles, and both are preserved. (Matthew 9:16-17)

<sup>2</sup> "By a **new** and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;" (Heb. 10:20)

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 5:17

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 40:3

<sup>5</sup> "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your **vain** conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" (1 Peter 1:18)

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have put on the **new man**<sup>6</sup>, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:" (Col. 3:10)

My wife also received Jesus Christ as her Savior and that same year Nancy and I were married. Two years later we were in Bible college. Just before graduation we had our first born daughter and began to hear about home schooling. We soon became aware of pastors and godly parents being jailed, or having to flee the state of Nebraska because of their educational choices. While our child was still in infancy we watched and listened as these men and women fought the legal and legislative battles for the freedom to choose their children's educational path. We stood in admiration of these brave parents who helped pave the way for the explosive growth of home schooling our country has seen in the last twenty years. In a large measure, we came to Montana because of an attitude of liberty regarding the rights of parents to instruct their children at home. SB291 would reverse that long standing heritage of educational liberty in Montana.

Ironically, the law in this country would allow us to choose torture and death for our children before birth, but after choosing life, the law suddenly purports to "care" about the quality of our child's education. We assert that the state does not have a compelling educational, cultural or financial interest that should logically or legally supersede the interest of compassionate and caring parents. SB291 seeks to protect children from their parents. Conversely, Bible believing parents seek to protect their children from the state. SB291 would turn parents into licensed agents acting in the behalf of the interests of the state, not necessarily the best interests of the child.

The word of God is clear that those who have been born again, have the mind of Christ<sup>7</sup> and we are commanded that we ". . . be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."<sup>8</sup> Christian parents are to seek the will of God for their children's minds, not the will of the state. SB291 shows no respect for that sincerely held religious conviction.

Fathers and mothers are repeatedly told that they are responsible to teach their children the laws of God<sup>9</sup>, train up their children in the way that they should go<sup>10</sup>, and that they are to bring them up in the nourishment and admonition of the Lord.<sup>11</sup> The apostle Paul further instructs young Timothy that he is to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."<sup>12</sup> Christian parents are to teach and train their children to study to gain the approval of God, to love and obey Him above all earthly authority. There simply is no command in Scripture for parents to let "the powers that be" educate their children. This was only done in the Bible in times of captivity by oppressors. SB291 is oppressive and intrusive. The apostles said to those who opposed the fact that they were teaching

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<sup>6</sup> "And that ye put on the **new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24)

<sup>7</sup> "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor. 2:16

<sup>8</sup> Romans 12:2

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 6:6-9

<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 22:6

<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 6:4

<sup>12</sup> Timothy 2:15

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by the authority of Christ alone, "We ought to obey God rather than men."<sup>13</sup> SB291 would have us seek to please men and teach for man made reasons. In short, SB291 would have us to obey men rather than God.

For the state of Montana to stick its nose into the God ordained institution of home and family, without a license from God to do so, is a severe violation of Scripture and of the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This bill would be more honest if it stated up front that all children born in the state of Montana are property of the state and parents are hereby relegated to the status of employees who are to work without pay.

In conclusion, I will quickly summarize our objections to SB291:

SB291 through teacher certification, licensing and monitoring, would turn parents into licensed agents acting in the behalf of the interests of the state, not necessarily the best interests of the child.

SB291 does not respect the sincerely held religious convictions of home schooling parents  
SB291 is oppressive and intrusive in nature and does not respect the God ordained order of the home.

SB291 purports to mend no ailment of any kind and therefore is unnecessary.

SB291 would reverse a long standing heritage of educational liberty in Montana.

SB291 through testing would attempt to alter the conviction that young people are to study to show themselves approved primarily unto God.

SB291 amends Section 20-5-111 of the Montana code in a contradictory manner at every point:

- 1) SB291 (sec. 1-8) is at odds with the very essence of the home school philosophy;
- 2) SB291 (sec. 1-8) through testing would alter the goal of home schooling and therefore limit the choice of curriculum and textbooks;
- 3) SB291 (sec. 1-8) requires home school students to be tested at a public school which is not a desirable place of instruction of which testing is a part;
- 4) SB291 (sec. 1-8) through monitoring and testing evaluation would render parental evaluation superfluous.

I therefore urge this honorable senate education committee to kill this bill in its entirety.

Sincerely,



Keith Simmons

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 5:29