

# PENNSYLVANIA HOME SCHOOLERS

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## Victory in Education Committee

from Howard Richman

On Tuesday June 28th, HB 2501, the omnibus bill written by Rep. Ron Cowell, was passed out of the House Education Committee, with the committee members voting unanimously for our amendment to let parents teach special ed. children at home.

Dozens of homeschoolers, describing their own experiences with special education, and Hewitt Research had written letters to each member of the committee urging them to support the bill after changing the provision that prevented parents from teaching special ed. children. Hewitt Research included a magazine article describing a Supreme Court Case (Burlington vs. Massachusetts, 1985) which clearly stated that parents

can take their children out of a public school special ed. program at any time in order to enroll them in a private program. In addition to all of these splendid letters, homeschoolers in the districts of just about every member of the House Education Committee called their Representatives on the phone asking them to support the bill after changing the odious provision. If you were one of the people who contacted members of the House Education Committee, now is the time to write thank you letters.

As it turned out, we had three amendments to deal with, not just one. Two amendments were good, and one amendment, in its first form, was very bad. The good amendments were sponsored by Rep. Steve Freind and Rep. Ron Cowell, the bad one by Rep. John Davies. Freind's amendment permitted parents to teach special education children. Cowell's amendment required

superintendents to return our documentation after photocopying what they wanted for their files. Davies' amendment, in its first form, required parents to have their children take the TELLS test, if their superintendent so requested.

On June 21st, Jim, Tom and I headed to Harrisburg for what we thought would be the committee vote, but Rep. Cowell, during the night, had gone to the hospital with a kidney stone, and the meeting was canceled. However, the canceled meeting turned out to be a blessing. It gave us the chance to cement our ties with Rep. Freind and win over several other members of the committee including Rep. Burns and Rep. Battisto. Most importantly, at the end of that afternoon, Jim and I met with Rep. Davies, who was ready to compromise after receiving dozens of calls from his constituents objecting to his TELLS test amendment.

His amendment had originally stipulated that parents would have to give their children the TELLS test (a 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade reading and mathematics achievement test) if the superintendent required, and would have to send their children to a public school remediation class if the superintendent so directed.

Rep. Davies was ready to negotiate. He explained how his nephew had required remedial help when he returned to public school after being homeschooled on a sailboat in Florida. (His nephew is now a pilot for a major airline!) We explained that many parents would object to TELLS test remediation in a public school on religious grounds and that it would be a major disruption to send children for a remediation class during the homeschooling day. Jim and I listened carefully. Jim noticed that Rep. Davies only envisioned that the superintendents would require TELLS in cases where they didn't think the parents were educating their children. Rep. Davies accepted Jim's suggestion that TELLS just be required if ordered by the hearing officer in due process hearings after the superintendent had found that the parents are not educating their children. That hearing officer has the right to order the children into school, so the TELLS test, then, would be a life preserver which could allow parents to continue homeschooling legally. Furthermore, even in that situation,

### SCHOOL DISTRICTS COOPERATING WITH HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES IN PA

(NOTE: LOCAL POLICIES VARY WIDELY, BUT THESE DISTRICTS HAVE DEALT WITH HOMESCHOOLING-- YOU WON'T BE A FIRST CASE IN THESE DISTRICTS, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT SAYING APPROVAL WILL NECESSARILY BE EASY, FAIR, OR ASSURED. GUIDELINES SOME FAMILIES CAN LIVE WITH WILL BE INTOLERABLE TO OTHERS)

ABBINGTON  
ALLENTOWN  
ALTOONA  
ANNVILLE-CLEONA  
APOLLO-RIDGE  
ARMSTRONG  
BANGOR AREA  
BEAVER  
BETHEL PARK  
BUTLER  
CANTON AREA  
CENTRAL DAUPHIN  
CENTRAL  
CHELTENHAM  
CHESTER UPLAND  
CENTRAL BUCKS  
COMMODORE PERRY  
CONEAUT LAKE  
CRAWFORD  
CRAWFORD-CENTRAL  
CRESSON  
DALLASTOWN  
DOWNTOWN AREA  
EASTON  
EAST LYCOMING  
EAST PENN  
EASTERN LEBANON CO  
FAIRVIEW  
FLEETWOOD  
FOX CHAPEL  
FRANKLIN REGIONAL  
GIRARD

HAMPTON  
HIGHLANDS  
HOMER CENTER  
HOPEWELL  
INDIANA  
JEFFERSON-MORGAN  
JERSEY SHORE  
KANE  
KEYSTONE CENTRAL  
KISKI  
LAKEVIEW  
LATROBE  
MARPLE MEADOWTOWN  
MCGUFFEY  
MILLCREEK  
MONTGOMERYVILLE  
MT. LEBANON  
MT. PLEASANT  
MT. UNION  
NORTHAMPTON AREA  
NORTHEAST BRADFORD  
NORTHEASTERN  
NORTH HILLS  
NORTH PENN  
NORTH WESTERN  
NORWIN  
PARKLAND  
PEN ARGYL AREA  
PENN HILLS  
PENN MANOR  
PENNSBURG  
PERKIOMEN VALLEY  
PETERS TOWNSHIP

SAUCAN VALLEY  
SHALER  
SOLANCO  
SOUTHERN (YORK CO.)  
SOUTH WEST BUTLER  
SOUTHERN TIOGA  
SLIPPERY ROCK  
SPRING COVE  
SPRING GROVE  
TAMAQUA  
TREDYFFRIN-EASTTOWN  
TRINITY  
TROY  
TYRONE AREA  
UNIONVILLE-CHADDS FORD  
WEST BRANCH  
WEST CHESTER AREA  
WEST JEFFERSON HILLS  
WEST MIFFLIN  
WEST PERRY  
WILLIAMSPORT  
WYALUSING  
WYOMING VALLEY WEST  
YORK  
YOUTH  
PHOENIXVILLE  
PINE-RICHLAND  
QUAKERTOWN COMMUNITY  
QUAKER VALLEY  
RED LION AREA  
RIDLEY  
RINGGOLD

PA Homeschoolers' Masthead  
lettered by Jesse Richman (II)