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Overt Hostility toward Homeschoolers

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The controversy over a California appeals court ruling on homeschooling continues to expand, even as Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger pledge to defend the rights of homeschooling parents and Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell on Tuesday affirmed families' right to homeschool their children. As [The Los Angeles Times](#) reported March 12, the superintendent told parents, "There's no cause for alarm." He continued: "I want to assure parents that chose to home school that California Department of Education policy will not change in any way as a result of this ruling," he said in a written statement. "Parents still have the right to home school in our state."

Now, even as the political and legal shockwaves reverberate, an overt hostility to homeschooling families has come to the surface. One example is an [opinion column](#) published in the March 13 edition of [The Los Angeles Times](#). On March 12, the paper's editors had called for the California legislature to adopt legislation recognizing a right to homeschool and establishing an appropriate set of regulations [[see editorial here](#)].

In "[Regulating Home Schoolers](#)," Walter P. Coombs and Ralph E. Shaffer — both emeritus professors at Cal Poly Pomona, respond to the editorial and unleash vitriol at homeschooling, calling it "elitist" and "illiberal."

From their article:

There has always been something decidedly elitist and anti-democratic in home schooling. It smacks of a belief that privileged children should not have to associate with the other kids in the neighborhood and that by staying home, they would not be subjected to the leavening effect of democracy. Moreover, it is apparent from the cries of the far right that there has been a specific policy in home schooling — to teach only the ideas acceptable to ideologues who fear the contaminating influence of what is commonly known as a liberal education.

Of course, it is the argument of these two retired professors that is truly elitist. They presume to know what is best for all the children of the state — better than parents. Their hostility toward parents is evident in their argument that homeschool parents teach social studies by putting their kids in front of the television screen "watching Fox with its strange assortment of oddballs pontificating on current events."

Get that? The animus toward evangelical Christians is also transparent:

It's evident that the vast majority who teach their offspring in front of the television do so because they don't want their children to be subjected to such dangerous doctrines as evolution, abortion, global warming, equal rights and other ideas abhorrent to the evangelical mantra.

This means, of course, that these professors demand that all children be subjected to the "dangerous doctrines" they list — including evolution and abortion.

A similar level of hostility is evident in an [article](#) published at the Web site of the [National Education Association](#) (NEA), the nation's largest teachers' union. As the author asserts, the union demands that the teaching of children be left

to “professionals,” not parents:

So, why would some parents assume they know enough about every academic subject to home-school their children? You would think that they might leave this — the shaping of their children’s minds, careers, and futures — to trained professionals. That is, to those who have worked steadily at their profession for 10, 20, 30 years! Teachers!

The article’s author, Dave Arnold, suggests that parents are “gullible” and “well-meaning amateurs” who simply have no business educating their own children.

Note carefully that the situation in California is still unfolding — but the reality of such hostility toward homeschooling parents is becoming all too clear.

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