

ACTION ALERT !

Your Help Needed

TEXTBOOK LOAN REVISION WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL

Rule 4 of the Nebraska Department of Education governs the Textbook Loan Program. This program authorizes public school districts to purchase and loan secular textbooks upon request to parents (and legal guardians) of children enrolled in private schools. Limited funding for these textbook purchases is provided exclusively by an annual appropriation by the state Legislature.

The Nebraska Department of Education has proposed revisions to Rule 4, some of which make modest improvements. **However, one proposed revision in particular is substantive and would detrimentally affect our parents' rights under this program. The proposed change would restrict the opportunity for parents to request and borrow the publisher's most recent copyright edition of eligible textbook titles, i.e. of textbooks designated for use in the local public schools. For at least the past 15 years, Rule 4 has provided this flexibility in the occasional circumstances in which a more recent copyright edition of a designated textbook title (author and series) is available from the publisher. In fact, the practice has been encouraged by the Department; it is common sense to facilitate prudent use of the state funding.**

The Department of Education's proposed change in policy would limit the options to (1) textbooks already in the Rule 4 inventory, (2) the title and copyright edition being used in the local public schools, and (3) any new textbook titles or editions the public school would designate by a deadline that it plans to use in the next school year.

The Rule 4 public hearing was conducted by a hearing officer on September 12. Representatives of the *Nebraska Federation of Catholic School Parents*, including Federation president, Jackie Ridder of West Point, testified in opposition to the proposed restriction.

Moreover, we offered an amendment that would make the current, longstanding practice even more explicit; that parents would clearly have the option to request and borrow the latest copyright edition available from the publisher.

The decision on this revision will be made by the State Board of Education (eight members), most likely at its next business meeting, on October 4.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Please contact, by e-mail or regular mail, the member of the State Board of Education who represents the district in which you reside. Respectfully urge him/her to oppose the Department of Education's proposed revision and to adopt the amendment that would make it clear that parents may request the most recent copyright edition available from the publisher. It is always good to personalize the importance of this program from your perspective as a parent and taxpayer. Here are a few key points that might be helpful in composing your message:

- Mandating the expenditure of taxpayer funds to purchase outdated textbooks would ignore common sense and waste legislatively-appropriated funds.
- The current practice has been in place since at least 1992 and the State Attorney General's office has said the current practice is permissible.
- The current funding limits mean that the program provides the equivalent of one new textbook per private-school student every 4 years. Given this reality, the desire of parents to borrow the latest copyright editions of textbook titles should be respected.

How to reach your State Board of Education Member:

District Representatives

1. **Mr. Robert Evnen:** robert.evnen@sbe.ne.gov; 301 South 13th St., Ste. 500; Lincoln, NE 68508 (eastern Lancaster County including Lincoln)
2. **Mr. Kerry Winterer:** kerry.winterer@sbe.ne.gov; 12388 Rose Lane; Omaha, NE 68154 (Cass, southern Sarpy, eastern half of Saunders, northwestern Douglas Counties)
3. **Mr. Jim Scheer:** jscheer@cableone.net; 306 Valley View Drive; Norfolk, NE 68701 (Cedar, Dixon, Dakota, Wayne, Thurston, Madison, Stanton, Cuming, Burt, Platte Colfax, Dodge, and western half of Saunders Counties)
4. **Ms. Carole Woods Harris:** cwharris17@msn.com; 5404 Ellison Ave.; Omaha, NE 68104 (eastern Douglas, northeastern Sarpy Counties)
5. **Mrs. Patricia Timm:** pattimm@charter.net; 1020 North 21st St.; Beatrice, NE 68310 (Northwestern Lancaster, Gage, York, Seward, Adams, Clay, Fillmore, Saline, Webster, Nuckolls Thayer, Jefferson, Otoe, Johnson, Nebraska, Pawnee, and Richardson Counties)
6. **Mr. Fred Meyer:** fredmeyer@gpcom.net; 1580 Highway 281; St. Paul, NE 68873 (Holt, Antelope, Pierce, Knox, Garfield, Wheeler, Boone, Custer, Valley, Greeley, Nance, Sherman, Howard, Merrick, Buffalo, Hall, Hamilton, Phelps, Kearney, Harlan, Phelps, and Franklin Counties)
7. **Mrs. Kandy Imes:** kimes1950@earthlink.net; 1850 20th St.; Gering, NE 69341 (Sioux, Dawes, Box Butte, Sheridan, Cherry, Scotts Bluff, Morrill, Garden, Banner, Kimball, Cheyenne, Deuel, Grant, Hooker, Thomas, Blaine, Loup, Arthur, McPherson, Logan, Keith, Lincoln, Dawson, Perkins, Chase, Hayes, Frontier, Gosper, Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willow, and Keya Paha, Boyd, Brown, Rock, and Furnas Counties)
8. **Mr. Joe Higgins:** jbhomaha@yahoo.com; 5067 S. 107th St.; Omaha, NE 68127 (southern Douglas, northern Sarpy Counties)

If more than one board member is listed for the county in which you reside, and you do not know which is your representative, please contact each of them.

E-mail is the best means of contact.

If you cannot, or prefer not to, use e-mail, consider writing a personal letter. Either way, keep your message brief and to the point.

Please, if possible, e-mail us a copy of anything you send on this matter, so we can keep track of the contacts. You can e-mail a copy either to JeremyMurphy@neb.rr.com or to nfcspection@neb.rr.com.

Also, attention residents of either District 1 or District 2: Your State Board representatives, Robert Evnen and Kerry Winterer respectively, have been supportive of preserving the current and longstanding policy; to not carry forward with the Department’s proposed restriction regarding the copyright issue. Please be sure to thank these two State Board members and encourage them to continue their efforts.

THANK YOU.

Nebraska Federation of Catholic School Parents

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