

THE LIE:

"Goals 2000 is not a takeover of local school districts."

Wrong!

By Robert Colaco, National Chairman of Citizens for a Better America™.

The United States Department of Education (USED) has done all it can on its internet website to communicate that Goals 2000 is not a takeover of local school districts but let's take a look at the facts otherwise. Is there anyone saying anything negative about Goals 2000?

Let me quote at length what the Education Liaison for Alabama Governor James, Dick Brewbaker, says in his article titled, "Goals 2000: Out of Business in Alabama," that was submitted to The Montgomery Advertiser, December 1995.

"Proponents' of participation in the Goals 2000 program reasoning runs something like this: 'Alabama needs all the money for education it can get. We are eligible for something like six million dollars under this program. The Federal Government has assured us that there are no strings attached to this money. We need the money so let's take it.'

"Until recently, I agreed with this line of thinking. Then I did something radical—I read the Educate America Act. What I found was alarming. Far from being 'money with no strings attached,' the Act contained one federal mandate after another. The Wall Street Journal said that in reference to states applying for money under the Act, there are 63 uses of the word 'will,' 195 of 'shall,' 33 of 'require,'

and 13 of 'must' (I confess I did not take time to count them myself). No strings attached? Hardly. Among other things, the Educate America Act creates what amounts to a 'National School Board' with the power to certify a state's content standards, student performance standards, and assessments. In short, for states that choose to participate, the Act amounts to a transfer of power from the states to a new federal bureaucracy created by the Act. The Federal Government has never given money away with no strings attached, and they are not doing it now.

"In an effort to entice Alabama to participate in Goals 2000, the U.S. Department of Education sent Assistant Secretary of Education Michael Cohen to convince us that we had nothing to fear from this program. The meeting which resulted can

'Don't worry, we aren't going to enforce that section, trust us.'

only be described as bizarre. In response to our questions about the onerous mandates in the Act, the response was always the same: 'Don't worry, we aren't going to enforce that section, trust us.' Mr. Cohen's repeated assertion was what is written in the statute does not matter and that we should feel free to ignore it. It occurs to me that Alabama has tried to ignore federal statutes before, and the result is always the same: we end up in front of a Federal judge who forces us to obey the letter of the Federal law. It all comes down to a clear choice: believe the law means what it says or take the word of a Clinton appointee that it doesn't. The Governor, armed with incontrovertible facts, chose to take the statute at its word and have no part of it."

Dick Brewbaker goes on to say: "...I can think of two important groups of policy makers who agree with the Governor's position—the Alabama Legislature and the U.S. House of Representative. On July 27, both houses of the Alabama Legislature

passed a resolution calling for the repeal of Goals 2000."

The people of Alabama might have thought they had the problem solved, but there is an important update from the U.S. Education Department. In part it reads as follows:

"Please note that the 1996 budget bill signed into law on April 26, 1996, amends the Act in important ways. It..

...2. allows districts in states not participating in Goals 2000 as of October 20, 1995, to apply directly to the Secretary for Goals 2000 grants as long as the state education agency approves (states eligible for this option were NH, VA, AL, MT, and OK and districts in NH, MT, OK are taking advantage of the new option);" (US Education Department).

Alabama like other state legislatures still faces the provisions in Goals 2000 that allow individual school boards to apply directly without going through the state. If this doesn't look like a federal takeover of local school boards then the folks at the U.S. Education Department need to go back to school.

For those who still say we need the money, Dick Brewbaker makes a good point when he says, "This whole debate really boils down to the issue of who will control the schools. The Federal Government has, through its funding policy, been in the business of eroding state authority in education for a long time. In the area of special education and vocational education, for example, the Feds supply about the ten percent of the money yet they require the entire program to be run according to the Federal mandate. In other words, they put in a dime and get to control the whole dollar. In the Goals 2000 program, it is more of the same except this time the Feds are after a real bargain. In return for about a half-cent on the dollar, the Federal Government puts itself in position to control a state's content standards and assessments which is tantamount to controlling what is taught in the classroom." ✍