



MORTON

UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

Opinion Editorial - Local Control

For release Tuesday, September 14th, 2021

The state's mandates regarding masks and vaccinations are merely the headlines and excuses of the moment in an incremental dismantling of local control in public education – and other arenas -- that began decades ago, with the pace only picking up since.

Indeed, the latest top-down decisions from the governor and Illinois State Board of Education – and at times we've seen this at the federal level, as well – are just a continuation of the pattern of higher officials substituting their judgments for those of local school boards. That has included matters of curriculum, testing, student dress codes, accommodations, discipline, athletics, school lunch offerings, etc. “Unfunded mandates” – directives without the dollars to implement them -- have been a local rallying cry for as long as many of us can remember.

It is fair to ask: What is the point of electing local school boards at all?

We would grant that public safety is of the utmost importance – we want to protect our kids, employees and ourselves, too -- and that people of good intention may differ on the approaches to this pandemic and how best to protect the short- and long-term health and interests of our students. What we would not concede is that we must abandon our principles as a nation in order to preserve and protect the nation and its citizens. Among those principles is the rule of law.

Since March 2020, Gov. Pritzker has issued more than 80 executive orders regarding COVID-19 that have carried the force of law. The actual lawmaking

branch of government – the Illinois General Assembly -- has been missing in action.

Lest anyone think our stance here is political, whether it's a Republican governor of Florida or a Democratic governor of Illinois making these unilateral calls, it is clear that this has become a bipartisan affliction. The aims may be different but the behavior is the same, and worthy of objection in either case.

Indeed, it is impossible to believe that governing by executive order is what this nation's Founders had in mind when they were forming our nation. Not only have school boards been made irrelevant, but evidently legislatures have been, too. This is not what we teach our students in regards to how our republic is supposed to work. We may not always agree with the legislative outcome, but at least our time-tested processes have been respected.

Meanwhile, federal and state law are abundantly clear as to where the authority lies in regards to public education: "Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children," while other public and even private jurisdictions "have the primary responsibility for supporting that parental role."

Gov. Pritzker himself once subscribed to that view. As recently as July, he stated that "families should be involved in making decisions for their own families. And, school districts and school boards will make decisions for the schools within their districts."

Evidently, the Governor and ISBE really don't believe this.

Meanwhile, those of us who took the governor at his word are now dismissed and derided as an extreme minority, the enemies of science and compassion.

First, too many of our state leaders mistake compliance with agreement and consent. More of us than they apparently wish to admit have serious misgivings about how decisions are being made in Springfield.

As for the science, it – or at least the communication of it from the CDC and others – has been inconsistent, at best. Finally, who's really being punitive here – and to schoolchildren, not adults – when the consequences of not falling in line

are to make high school diplomas worthless, or deny funding, or prevent students from participating in athletics? It is precisely because we *do care* about our young people that we are sparing them these threatened punishments.

In short, may Springfield forgive those of us who have come to view it as less a partner than an adversary in the education of our children.

To say this is a challenging and unprecedented time understates it, but the zig-zag nature of decision-making out of Springfield has made it far more difficult to manage our classrooms, our schools, and our districts, creating unnecessary conflict in our communities. None of that serves our students – our reason for being – well.

It's not just about the pandemic. It's about *all* of the decisions that have been taken out of local hands by those who are all too distant from the resulting fallout. Enough is enough. Absolutely, it is the principle of the thing. Please, restore local control *and* accountability to our communities and those of us who know them best.

Respectfully,

Morton CUSD# 709

Dr. Jeff Hill, Superintendent and Morton District 709 Board of Education

Central Community High School District #71

Dr. Dustin Foutch, Superintendent and Board of Education

El Paso Gridley CUSD #11

Mr. Brian Kurz, Superintendent

Odell CCSD #435

Mr. Mark A. Hettmansberger, Superintendent and Board of Education

Taylorville CUSD#3

Mr. Chris Dougherty, Superintendent and Board of Education

Meridian CUSD #101

Mr. Jonathan D. Green, Superintendent

Regional Office of Education #11

Dr. Kyle Thompson, Regional Superintendent

Midwest Central CUSD 191
Dr. Todd Hellrigel, Superintendent and Board of Education

Trico Community Unit District #176
Mr. Larry D. Lovel, Superintendent

Carlyle CUSD #1
Ms. Annie Gray, Superintendent and Board of Education

Central A&M
Dr. DeAnn Heck, Superintendent and Board of Education

Mt. Zion CUSD #3
Dr. Travis R. Roundcount, Superintendent and Board of Education

Damiansville ESD #62
Mr. Dustin E. Nail, Superintendent and Board of Education

Pana CUSD #8
Mr. Jason Bauer, Superintendent

Shelbyville CUSD #4
Mr. Shane Schuricht, Superintendent and Board Members: Abbie Ballard, Jake Hankins, Gary Hayden, Ellen Trainor and Scott West

Red Bud CUSD #132
Mr. Jonathan Tallman, Superintendent and Board of Education

Gardner South Wilmington High School #73
Mr. Josh DeLong, Superintendent and Gardner South Wilmington #73 Board of Education.

South Central School District #401
Mr. Kerry Herdes, Superintendent and South Central Board of Education

Paris CUSD #4
Ms. Danette Young, Superintendent and Paris CUSD #4 Board of Education

Braceville Elementary School #75
Mr. Josh DeLong, Superintendent and Braceville Elementary School District #75 Board of Education

Nokomis CUSD #22

Dr. Scott E. Doerr, Superintendent and the following Board members: Mr. Chad Ruppert, Board President, Mr. Carl Kettelkamp, Board Members, and Mr. Denny Bauman, Board Secretary.

Clifton Central CUSD # 4

Ms. Tonya Evans, Superintendent and Board of Education

Havana CUSD #126

Mr. R. Mathew Plater, Superintendent and Board of Education

Eureka CUSD #140

Mr. Robert Bardwel, Superintendent and Eureka CUSD 140 Board of Education

Freeburg Community High School District #77

Mr. Gregory Frerking, Superintendent

Woodlawn USD #209

Mr. Eric Helbig, Superintendent and Board of Education

Windsor CUSD #1

Mr. Erik Van Hovel, Superintendent and Windsor CUSD #1 Board of Education

Cowden-Herrick CUSD #3A

Mr. Seth Schuler, Superintendent and Cowden-Herrick Board of Education

Bartelso SD #57

Mr. Tom Siegle, Superintendent

St. Libory CSD #30

Dr. Thomas Rude, Superintendent

Mt. Pulaski CUSD #23

Mr. Fredrick A Lamkey, Superintendent and Mt. Pulaski Board of Education

Ridgeview CUSD #19

Mr. Erik Young, Superintendent and Board of Education

Flanagan-Cornell District #74

Mr. Jerry Farris, Superintendent and Flanagan-Cornell FC 74 Board of Education

New Berlin CUSD #16

Ms. Jill Larson, Superintendent and Board of Education

North Clay #25

Mr. Travis Wyatt, Superintendent and Board of Education

Benton Consolidated High School District #103

Mr. Benjamin Johnson, Superintendent

Marshall CUSD #C-2

Mr. Kevin Ross, Superintendent

Red Hill CUSD #10

Mr. Jackie Walker, Superintendent and Red Hill Board of Education

Community Unit School District #4

Mr. Scott D. Riddle, Superintendent and CUSD#4 Board of Education

Bourbonnais Elementary School District #53

Dr. Adam Ehrman, Superintendent

Vandalia C.U.S.D. #203

Dr. Jennifer Garrison, Superintendent and Board President Joe Lawson

Tremont CUSD #702

Mr. Sean Berry and Board of Education

Roanoke-Benson CUSD #60

Mr. Thomas Welsh, Superintendent and Roanoke-Benson Board of Education

ROE 21

Ms. Lorie LeQuatte, Regional Superintendent

Iuka Grade School CCSD #7

Mr. Sam Alli and Board of Education

Oakwood CUSD#76

Mr. Larry Maynard, Superintendent

Central City School #133

Mr. Tim Branon, Superintendent

Farmington Central CUSD #265

Dr. Zac Chatterton, Superintendent

Field Community CUSD #3

Mr. Wayne Stone, Superintendent

LeRoy CUSD#2

Mr. Gary Tipsord, Superintendent and LeRoy CUSD#2 Board of Education

Payson CUSD#1

Dr. Donna Veile and Board of Education: Lisa Schwartz, Vinson Sill, Chanse Barker, Clint Twaddle, Danelle Donley, and Denise Albsmeyer

Benton CCSD #47

Mr. Steve Smith, Superintendent

Neoga CUSD #3

Mr. Bill Fritcher, Superintendent

St. Elmo CUSD #202

Ms. Julie Healy, Superintendent and Board of Education

Okaw Valley CUSD #302

Mr. Kent Stauder, Superintendent and Board of Education

Mount Vernon Township High School #201

Ms. Melanie Andrews, Superintendent and Matthew Flanigan, Board President

Ramsey CUSD #204

Ms. Melissa Ritter, Superintendent and Ramsey Board of Education.

Teutopolis CUSD #50

Mr. Matthew Sturgeon, Superintendent

Sullivan CUSD #300

Mr. Ted Walk, Superintendent

Bluford USD #318

Dr. Shane Gordon, Superintendent

Mulberry Grove CUSD #1

Mr. Robert Koontz and Board of Education

Effingham CUSD #40

Mr. Mark E. Doan, Superintendent

Anna-Jonesboro CHSD #81
Mr. Rob Wright, Superintendent

Anna CCSD #37
Dr. Julie Bullard, Superintendent and Anna CCSD #37 Board of Education

Beecher City CUSD #20
Mr. Philip Lark, Superintendent and Board of Education

ROE #13
Mr. Matt Renaud, Superintendent

Damiansville ESD #62
Mr. Dustin E. Nail, Superintendent and Damiansville ESD #62 Board of Education

Freeburg Community Consolidated District #70
Dr. Melanie Brink and Board of Education

Hutsonville CUSD #1
Ms. Julie Kraemer, Superintendent and Board of Education

Altamont CUSD #10
Mrs. Casey Adam, Superintendent

Gifford CCSD #188
Dr. Jay P. Smith, Superintendent

Salem Community High School #600
Dr. Brad Detering, Superintendent

Brownstown CUSD #201
Mr. Mike Shackelford, Superintendent and Board of Education

Prairie du Rocher CUSD #134
Mr. Rob Pipher, Superintendent

Calhoun CUSD #40
Ms. Andrea Lee, Superintendent

Delavan CUSD #703
Dr. Andrew Brooks, Superintendent

Scott-Morgan CUSD #2

Dr. Kevin Blankenship, Superintendent and Board of Education

Winchester CUSD #1

Dr. Kevin Blankenship and Board of Education

DeLand-Weldon CUSD #57

Ms. Amanda Geary, Superintendent and Board of Education

Spring Garden CCSD #178

Ms. Tammy Beckham, Superintendent

Chester CUSD #139

Mr. Brian Pasero, Superintendent

Norris City-Omaha-Enfield CUSD #3

Mr. Matthew J. Vollman, Superintendent

Clinton CUSD 15

Mr. Curt Nettles, Superintendent

Cumberland CUSD #77

Mr. Todd Butler, Superintendent