



A Statewide Network Sharing Information on Home Education • *Editors: Susan & Howard Richman*

**Story of a Bill
Now Available**

from Howard Richman

You may open your local newspaper one of these days and see a review of *Story of a Bill*, the new 152 page book that I wrote to tell the story of our successful legislative effort. If you see such a review, please send me a copy.

In the last issue I wrote that I wasn't sure whether we would publish it ourselves or have a commercial publisher do it. As it turned out, we decided on selfpublishing.

Raymond Moore was kind enough to write a Foreword. Rep. Joe Pitts wrote an Afterword. And innumerable people helped me by telling me about their experiences lobbying for the bill. So far, the few people who have read it have given it a very positive reception.

Raymond Moore writes in the Foreword, "You watch in awe as the drama unfolds."

Homeschooler Edris Wilson writes, "Words seem so inappropriate, but thanks anyway. We received our copy of *Story of a Bill*, on Friday. By Sunday I was finished reading it. I relived all the tension."

Homeschooler Tom Murphy writes, "Madalene and I both agree that your book is certainly a good read."

Homeschooler Carol Wright writes, "What a book! I've yelled 'Bravo' at the end of several portions, cried a few tears, and laughed aloud over several portions."

Tom Eldredge told me that he has read it to his kids as an education in Pennsylvania history and civics. I have too.

Donna Richoux, contributing editor at *Growing Without Schooling* writes, "Just read *Story of a Bill* all in a day, practically in one sitting. Found it totally engrossing and exciting!"

Even some people outside of the homeschooling movement have found they couldn't put it down. Ann Zelnoski and Peg Luksik, cochairs of the Pennsylvania Parents Commission (a group fighting for a bill which would give parents a say in the content of public school sex-education classes) are now selling it to their members. Ann describes how she couldn't put it down even as she stirred soup and cooked supper. Peg says she stayed up until midnight reading it even though she knew she would have to get up at 2 a.m. to feed her newborn baby.

Hope you get your own copy. Only \$6.95 plus tax (\$7.43) from Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, and we pay postage.

masthead by Jesse Richman (11)

New Law So Far

from Howard Richman

The new law seems to be working so far. A lot of people have sent in their affidavits to their superintendents by registered mail, and not heard anything else about it since. This is how it should be.

Memo from Dept. of Education

On January 17, the Department of Education sent a memo to school superintendents explaining the new home education law. It contains a good summary of the new law. If your superintendent doesn't seem to understand what his role is, you might quote it to him. All of the superintendents received it. (Whether they read it or not is another matter.) Here is that letter in full:

SUBJECT: New Home Schooling Law (Act 169)
TO: All District Superintendents
From: Donna D. Wall PhD
Commissioner of Basic Education

In August 1988, Judge Edwin Kosik of the United States District Court in Scranton decided the case of Jeffrey v. O'Donnell. He declared the tutorial provision of the Pennsylvania Compulsory Attendance Law, 24 P.S. Section 131327 unconstitutionally vague. His decision was based on the fact that the law did not define "properly qualified tutor." It invalidated the various standards and procedures superintendents had used to approve or disapprove of home schooling requests.

In response to this decision, the General Assembly passed Act 169 which the Governor signed into law. This law defines a "properly qualified tutor" as someone who teaches one or more children in a single family for a fee or other consideration. The tutor must be certified to teach in Pennsylvania public schools and cannot have been convicted of any of the crimes listed in Section 111(e) of the School Code. The tutor must submit his or her certification and criminal history record to the superintendent of their student's district of residence.

This new law also contains provisions about home education programs. A copy of the new law is enclosed (not yet available as Act 169, but as it was passed and was signed). Both you and your solicitor should study the new law and be familiar with its provisions. A Basic Education Circular (BEC) will be issued in the near future to address this matter as PDE policy. Following are some of the major items that require your attention and understanding:

- * Approval of the district superintendent to educate children at home is no longer required. Instead an affidavit filed with the superintendent of the child's district of residence will allow home schooling. The affidavit must contain;
 - . The name of the supervisor,
 - the name and age of each child in the program, and the address and phone number of the program site.
 - . An outline of proposed educational objectives, by subject area, for subjects required by law. These must be taught in English.
 - . Evidence of the child's immunization and evidence that the child has received health services.
 - . Assurance that the education program meets the requirements of Act 169.
 - . Certification that the supervisor and all adults living in the home and other custodial adults have not been convicted of criminal offenses listed in the law within the last five years. . . .
- * The term "supervisor" means a parent or guardian, natural or custodial, who is responsible for the education of the child. This person must hold a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- * Parents must maintain portfolios of the student's work, and students in grades 3, 5 and 8 must take standardized achievement tests in at least reading and mathematics. A list of nationally normed tests from which the parent may choose in lieu of the statewide tests, is enclosed. [Note from Howard: The list is published in an article about testing options printed elsewhere in this newsletter.]
- * The home education supervisor may request the school district or intermediate unit of residence to provide services that address the specific needs of the exceptional student. These services must be agreeable to both the supervisor and the school district or intermediate unit, and must take place in the public schools or a private school licensed to provide such programs and services.
- * The supervisor must have the student's educational program evaluated annually by a licensed clinical or school psychologist, Pennsylvania certified teacher, or nonpublic teacher or administrator with two years experience, who shall certify whether or not appropriate education is occurring. The evaluation is based on a review of the student's portfolio, and an interview with the child.
- * School districts must, upon parental request, provide copies of planned courses, textbooks and curriculum materials for use in home education programs.