



PARENTS RIGHTS ISSUE HEATING UP IN GOP POTUS PRIMARY - INSIDE SOURCES

Posted on July 28, 2023 by Michael Graham



During a recent campaign stop in New Hampshire, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie took time from throwing elbows at Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis to land a few jabs at the current Garden State governor. The issue? Parents' rights, a hot topic on the presidential campaign trail.

Asked about education policy by a New Hampshire voter, Christie took the opportunity to call out New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy for suing schools that want to keep parents informed about their children's behavior at school regarding sex and gender.

"My successor is actually suing school boards in New Jersey who say that when a child comes to a teacher or counselor or a principal and says that they're having confusion about their gender — he's suing to prevent them (school officials) from telling the parents," Christie said. "If you don't tell the parents, who's going to be counseling that child? Either no one or someone in the school who ... quite frankly, may not be trained to do that.

"We need to get smart about the way we have government interact with this," Christie said.

Photo: Former N.J. Gov. Chris Christie takes selfies with voters at a forum in Manchester, N.H. on July 24, 2023

Murphy has [filed lawsuits](#) against three school districts refusing to comply with his administration's policy mandating schools to deny information to parents about their children's on-campus actions regarding gender or sexuality. For example, if an elementary school child identifies as a different sex and asks to be called by another name while on school grounds, New Jersey parents are not to be told — even if they ask.

"Listen, we took these actions because it's the right thing to do," Murphy [said on "Face the Nation" Sunday](#). "Let's protect the rights of these precious kids. Let's do things the right way, the American way."

But is lying to parents about their children's behavior or keeping it secret from them — behavior that other adults like teachers, coaches and school custodians already know about — the "American way"? Most Americans disagree, polls show.

It is an issue in New Hampshire, where [a mom is suing the Manchester School District](#) over a similar policy. According to legal filings, the mother inadvertently learned during a remote school session that her child was engaging in transgender activity at school. She asked her child's teacher to use the child's legal name and the pronouns corresponding to the child's birth sex.

The teacher initially agreed to do as the parent asked. However, the principal sent a follow-up email telling the mother her instructions would be ignored and the school would decide what the mother was and was not allowed to know.

Parents who want to decide how their children will be treated and who want to be informed about their conduct should consider leaving public school, [the district's attorney said during a court hearing](#).

As in New Jersey, New Hampshire defenders of the "keep secrets" policy say parents are simply too dangerous to be allowed to know about their children's behavior. It is a view summed up by New Hampshire Democratic Party chairman Ray Buckley, who said if parents are allowed to know what schools know about their children, ["some kids will be kicked out or beaten \(to death\)."](#)

Republicans like Christie and other 2024 presidential candidates are siding with parents in this debate. Earlier this month, the Moms for Liberty national gathering in Philadelphia featured appearances by former president Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy.

Opponents have attacked Moms for Liberty as a "hate group," with [one New Hampshire Democratic state representative](#) referring to the women as "a**holes with casseroles" and the "Taliban."

Political observers say the parents' rights movement, particularly its ability to bring young, suburban women to the Republican side of the debate, is [one of the most powerful forces in contemporary American politics](#). Meanwhile, the influence of teacher unions continues to wane, particularly in the wake of their mishandling of the COVID pandemic and the resulting learning loss.

Last year, trust in the honesty and ethics of school teachers fell to an all-time low in the Gallup poll, and just 28 percent of Americans said they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in public schools. It was the second-lowest level of trust in the poll's history.

Meanwhile, national and state-level polls show widespread support for parental rights. "Seventy-four percent of registered voters believe that schools should not be able to help students "change their gender identity" without parental consent. Nearly the same number feel those sentiments should be explicitly enforced, as legislation requiring schools to obtain that consent is supported by 75 percent of registered voters," according to a [national poll in March](#).

A New Hampshire Journal poll in February found 78 percent of parents [opposed schools having the right to keep children's behaviors secret from their parents](#).

Christie told New Hampshire voters that he disagrees with the DeSantis approach to regulating public schools, which he described as "big government." Instead, Christie said, "I believe in leaving everything as much as possible to the parents."