

Among the 22 Dallas County Support Group members who attended this meeting, 10 later became charter board members of the Network of Iowa Christian Home Educators: Paul Bonstrom, Doug & Marylou Findley, Dave Koch, Garry & Julie Naberhaus, Don & Marie Nevins, Gary Patience, and Mary Stuart.

Senator Jim Riordan and Representative Dave Hibbard (both Democrats) joined the group for this meeting, spending the afternoon becoming acquainted and sharing concerns.

Was this unpretentious meeting between local homeschooling families and their elected representatives (and the subsequent communications that were enabled as its result) an insignificant event? Judge for yourself as you continue to read this account.

In the period leading up to the 1990 Iowa Legislative Session, the Iowa Department of Education presented a number of conditions for inclusion in a homeschooling bill. Here are some of the proposals:

- Minimum course of study requirements
- Local district approval of submitted homeschool programs
- Mandatory verification visits
- Automatic enrollment in public school for “failure to make adequate progress”
- Initiation of CINA proceedings for “failure to make educational progress”
- Mandatory dual-enrollment in public school
- Fire code applicability to homeschool sites
- Minimum daily instructional periods of at least 5½ hours per day.

The Iowa insert to *‘The Teaching Home’* magazine [Dec/Jan 1989-90] reported that the 1990 Iowa Legislature would open Monday, January 8, and that the Department of Education planned to propose new homeschooling legislation (dubbed “The Governor’s Bill”). This bill was to be “a compromise position acceptable to the State Board of Education,” according to Kathy Collins, the Department of Education legal consultant.

In the opening days of the 1990 Legislative Session, the so-called truancy bill, SF 149, which had passed the Senate in 1989, was placed on the House calendar and quickly passed with some changes included. Its next destination was to be a conference committee charged with ironing out the differences between the two chambers.

Homeschool families, including many of the Dallas County Homeschool Support Group members, frequented the statehouse, talking to their legislators and watching for the convening of this committee.

Days – and then weeks – passed. It appeared that differences between the two chambers – such as the setting of the compulsory attendance age and deciding whether to attach The Governor’s Bill to SF 149 – were stalling the process.

By mid-March, the constant monitoring for the convening of the SF 149 conference committee had begun to take its toll on the homeschool legislative watch volunteers. However, a friendly House Republican who was a staunch homeschool supporter promised that he would alert homeschooling families tracking the legislation if all the conference committee members left the floor of the House at the same time. There were a few false alarms, but this approach gave another level of security to those monitoring the statehouse.

Finally, during the waning hours of the 1990 legislative session, a call came from the homeschool-friendly legislator. The SF 149 conference committee was going to meet immediately. Within fifteen minutes, several dozen homeschoolers located the tiny room where the committee had convened and squeezed in to observe the process.

With impressive efficiency, the conference committee hammered out differences and filed their finished product – a combination truancy bill and homeschooling bill – on April 6, 1990.

Although some parts of this legislation closely resemble our current Iowa homeschooling law, it contained a number of odious provisions, including:

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