

California Court Criminalizes Home Schooling

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[] The founder of the World Congress of Families is infuriated over a California court's recent decision making criminals out of parents who home school their children without state licensing.

"It's an attempt to cut off escape routes to families fleeing the public education system," said Allan Carlson, the organization's founder. "This had nothing to do with the quality of home schooling. Home-school graduates tend to score higher on aptitude tests than products of public education. Students schooled at home frequently attend the best Ivy League colleges and universities."

Carlson believes the decision is "blatantly anti-family" and commended California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is often liberal on social issues, for calling the ruling "outrageous."

The controversy came after California appeals court Judge H. Walt Croskey ruled last month that home schooling is illegal unless administered by a credentialed teacher, igniting a firestorm of outrage among advocates of home schooling.

But officials at the California Department of Education appeared at least unwilling to immediately enforce the new ruling, which would conceivably lead to unlicensed parent teachers being imprisoned.

"I want to assure parents that chose to home school that California Department of Education policy will not change in any way as a result of this ruling," said Jack O'Connell, the

state's superintendent of public instruction. "Parents still have the right to home school in our state."

Though O'Connell said he respected the right of a parent to home school their child instead of sending them to a public or private school, it was not clear if some pending process of credentialing would render it a conditional right for future home schoolers.

The case prompted an immediate petition drive by the Virginia-based Home School Legal Defense Association, which quickly garnered the 250,000 signatures needed in its ongoing attempt to overturn the decision.