



6/12/2017 - The 2017 Nevada Legislative Session has come and gone.

And thankfully homeschool freedom and a parent's right to decide whether their child is ready for school at age 5 or wait until 6 or even 7, as allowed in law, remains intact. In addition, private, self-funded homeschooling was again protected from being included in the failed attempt to fund the NV-ESA program.

[AB 186](#) was introduced by Assemblywoman Diaz early in the session. Prior to the bill's introduction, NHN Officers Kelley Radow, Matt Alder, and Barbara Dragon met with the Assemblywoman to determine Ms. Diaz' reasoning behind seeking a revision to the compulsory attendance age from 7 to 5 and explain to her why doing so would limit the freedom of parents to make decisions to meet the needs of their child, [AB 186. Compulsory Attend Age Change. NHN ltr. Diaz. 2.27.2017](#). When the bill was introduced in the Assembly Education Committee on March 22nd, Nevada families showed up to voice their STRONG opposition to both the age change as well as question the bill requiring prekindergartens in every public school in the state, an unfunded mandate, [AB 186. NHN ltr. Assm. Ed .03.21.17](#).

On April 14th the bill was amended by the Assembly Education committee to lower the compulsory school attendance age from 7 to 6 instead of 5 and created a program to fund existing "prekindergarten programs" in public schools, private schools, and private daycare. The amended bill was given a "Do Pass" by Assembly Education and re-referred to the Assembly Ways and Means. NHN continued to oppose the amended version, [AB186.1st Reprint. NHN Position 4.26.17](#). Several media sources reported on the opposition to the bill which we believe helped stall the bill; see [VICTORY: AB 186 Dies](#) on the NHN website. Thankfully, the bill was never given a hearing by Assembly Ways and Means and the bill died in committee at the end of the 2017 session.

As always, NHN worked with [HSLDA](#) to oppose this bill. This session we issued joint statements and "Calls to Action" via email alerts and other social media outlets... Nevada homeschool parents and friends responded in great numbers. Nevada parents made known their displeasure with this flagrant display of power against parental rights. As Mike Smith, HSLDA President said in his wrap-up letter, "***This happened only because of your actions of writing letters, emails, making visits to the legislature, and your phone calls. Over 370 of you voiced your opposition to AB 186 on the Nevada Legislature opinion page. This is monumental.***"

[Click here for more information on events surrounding the defeat AB 186.](#)

SB 506 was a bill introduced by Governor Brian Sandoval to "fix" the funding problem with **SB 302**, the ESA bill that was passed in 2015 on a straight party-line vote but the "funding mechanism" of the bill was found to be unconstitutional by the [Nevada Supreme Court in September, 2016](#). Another bill this year, **SB 359** (Hammond) that was very similar to the Governor's bill never received a hearing and "died" in the Senate Education committee. Meanwhile SB 506 was not given a hearing in Senate Education (even though there were significant program changes to the bill in addition to the funding fix) and instead was re-referred directly to Senate Finance. That committee did not schedule a hearing for the bill until 7 days before the end of the session. Further, the hearing in a joint meeting before both Senate Finance and Assembly Ways & Means was scheduled at 3:00 pm on Memorial Day for 6:00 pm that evening... a true "surprise" to all involved.

I just happened to see an email from the Assembly Ways & Means Committee at 4:30 pm that day announcing the hearing and rushed up to the Legislature to listen. Homeschooling, as we had worked to assure in 2015, was explicitly not included in the program. However, a surprise [Conceptual Amendment to Sb506](#) proposed during the hearing by the Democrats included the word "homeschooling."

After 2 hours of debate by committee members, another 1 and a half hours testimony from the public "for" and "against" funding the ESA, I testified on behalf of NHN as "neutral" on the bill explaining that homeschoolers did not want money from the government that came with "strings" attached and that the term "homeschooling" should not be referenced since technically a parent using ESA funds to provide a "home based" education was not legally "homeschooling" but instead would be accountable to the state under the ESA program. Simply stated, based on the [Homeschool Freedom Bill](#) passed unanimously in both the NV Senate and Assembly in 2007... homeschoolers prefer their right to educate their children free government controls.

According to [press reports detailed here](#), SB 506 was doomed to failure. The Democratic controlled Legislature did not reach agreement on funding the bill. However, a one-time "donation" was made to the Governor's other "school choice" program, Opportunity Scholarships for low-income children to attend Nevada private schools. The constitutional portion of the ESA program remains in statute though no funding will go to anyone for at least two years when the legislature next convenes... stay tuned.

~BarbaraDragon
NHN Officer Emerita (active)