

# Bussing: What Rights Do Parents Have?

Some of the most frequently asked questions about school bussing, along with the best answers we can provide at the present time:

**Q.** Is bussing of children to the inner city already in effect? I hear...

**A.** You hear wrong. No one is being bussed to normal classes outside his own school district.

Some Farmington and Clarenceville students are being bussed to a vocational-technical school in Walled Lake for half-days, but that's because they have signed up for the program.

**Q.** How come our suburban school district attorneys aren't arguing this in court yet?

**A.** Because the suburbs

aren't defendants. A white homeowners group in Detroit, which is a co-defendant in the NAACP case before Federal Judge Stephen Roth, has asked the judge to make 85 suburbs co-defendants, but the judge hasn't ruled yet.

**Q.** Then how can there be talk about bussing children back and forth between Detroit and the suburbs when the suburbs aren't even part of the case?

**A.** The suburban school districts aren't, but the State of Michigan is, and we're all part of the state.

Judge Roth has found that the state, as a party, is guilty of de facto segregation.

The NAACP doesn't think it's necessary for the suburbs to be allowed to argue the case

at all. NAACP says the suburbs were in effect brought in when the state was convicted.

**Q.** Well, you reported that Judge Roth gave the State Board of Education 120 days to come up with an inter-district integration plan. How do we fight that?

**A.** Local school districts will have a chance to argue one way or the other when the state board plan is drawn up.

**Q.** We want our school board to appeal Roth's decision. How do we do it?

**A.** You may not be able to, so it won't appeal.

The Detroit school board is reportedly reluctant to appeal.

Conservative, anti-bussing groups in Detroit don't want to appeal because they are

afraid of having a 65-35 black-white ratio in their schools, and they want the suburbs to absorb some black students.

Possibly the State Board of Education could appeal, though politically it's pretty liberal.

**Q.** You mean we never get to argue the legal merits of the case?

**A.** It's starting to look that way. So far, Judge Roth has indicated no time for the suburbs' "if" of integration — only the "how."

**Q.** Should we write seeds of letters to him?

**A.** You can write to Judge Stephen Roth at the Federal Building in Detroit, if you want, but we can tell you right now that he already has a mountain of letters, telegrams and cards on his desk and they

haven't changed his mind. It's up to you.

**Q.** They talk about the black kids' right to be free of segregation, and that's all right, but what about our children's right to go to school near their homes?

**A.** You've been watching too much television and not reading the U.S. Constitution lately.

The Constitution has a phrase about "equal protection of the laws," by which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregation unconstitutional in 1954, but there's nothing about a right to go to classes near home.

**Q.** What about our local home rule powers? There are three levels of government — federal, state and local. Right?

**A.** Wrong. Read the U.S.

Constitution and you'll find only two mentioned — federal and state. Local governments are the creatures of the state. The state creates them, and the state can wipe them out.

There's simply no such thing as the local rights you're talking about. And Judge Roth has specifically pointed out that education is a state responsibility, and that the state can't dispel its obligation by passing the buck to local school districts.

Roth further has called local school district lines "arbitrary." Look at any map of school districts, and you'll see they have a crazy-quilt pattern. In many cases, these boundaries follow the lines of 19th century farms.

**Q.** Granted, we adults have created a segregated system. But why should the kids in school have to suffer?

**A.** We won't argue this, one way or the other. We'll just tell you what Judge Roth said:

"The principal causes of segregation" undeniably have been population movement and housing patterns, but state and local governmental actions, including school board actions, have played a substantial role in promoting segregation."

"There is enough blame for everyone to share."

"If there is segregation, it is

the responsibility of all of society. The schools, as the agents of social change, should take the lead in bringing about integration."

**Q.** Well, I think we should have some kind of constitutional right to have neighborhood schools. How do we get it?

**A.** The Redford Township hall has petitions asking for such an amendment.

Both houses of Congress have proposed constitutional amendments in one form or another. Write your senators and representative in Washington, D.C.

Conversely, if you think bussing is better than segregation, you should write, too.

**Q.** I'm sore about the high taxes I paid to build nice schools here, and now my kid won't get to use them...

**A.** Don't exaggerate the effects of bussing if it should come about. Figure it out. If the schools are integrated on an 80-20 white-black basis, it follows that your youngster could spend four years in his local school and only one in a school to which he would be bussed.

That's only a guess. We don't know what will happen.

**Q.** We're also paying higher operating taxes than Detroit for schools.

A. True. Detroit is a very low tax area when it comes to schools. But Gov. Milliken and Atty. Gen. Kelley are asking the State Supreme Court to declare the property tax for operations unconstitutional. So you can probably forget about different school tax rates in Detroit and the suburbs.

**Q.** What do I do if my child gets sick in school, or maybe he falls in a puddle and gets wet? He'll be many miles away.

**A.** Don't count your miles before they're hatched. It will be September of 1972 — at the very earliest! — before any such plan is implemented; maybe longer; maybe never.

But to get back to your question: We don't know.

**Q.** How about extra-curricular activities? If my young clarinetist has band after classes, how will she get home?

**A.** We don't know.

**Q.** Hold on! I'm one who thinks integration isn't such a bad idea, even if it means bussing.

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## 3 Congressmen Oppose Bussing

At least three of Observerland's four congressmen are actively opposing the bussing of children to achieve a racial balance in schools.

Congressman Jack McDonald (R-Farmington) has been urging fellow congressmen to sign a discharge petition which would force an anti-bussing bill constitutional amendment out of committee.

Reps. William Ford (D-Taylor) and William Broomfield (R-Royal Oak) have spoken out against bussing. Rep. Marvin Esh (R-Ann Arbor) was not available for comment before deadline.

BY MONDAY, 60 congressmen have signed the discharge petition backed by McDonald. At least 218 signatures are needed to force the bill out of the House Judiciary Committee.

The bill would amend the constitution to prohibit bussing to achieve integration.

"There is a very good chance this petition will be complete by the end of the month," McDonald said.

In form letters mailed to his constituents at his own expense, McDonald said, "I am unalterably opposed to bussing to achieve racial balance."

"The courts have obviously misinterpreted the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment as well as the intent of Congress in the 1964 Civil Rights Act," he said.

"In order to clarify and reaffirm our opposition to forced bussing, the Congress must now pass a constitutional amendment which provides that no public school student shall, because of race, color, or creed, be assigned to or required to attend a particular school."

"The absolute unfairness of the court's decision gives me confidence that we will be able to marshal the support necessary to accomplish this goal," he added.

FORD was a co-sponsor of an amendment in the Education and Labor Committee to preserve the neighborhood school concept.

"Our goal was to write into the law a provision that would protect school districts which had drawn attendance lines on

a racially non-discriminatory basis to permit children to attend the school nearest their homes," Ford said.

He said the amendment was defeated in the committee, but "we intend to renew our efforts on the House floor to have such a provision written into the law."

"Mass bussing is an unacceptable, ineffective and self-defeating means of attempting to provide equal educational opportunity."

"The problems confronting education and society can better be solved by providing local school authorities with sufficient financial support to assure quality education in neighborhood schools, and this has been my consistent position in working for the passage of education legislation during my seven years in Congress," Ford said.

Though Broomfield said he supports the drive for a constitutional amendment, he said that the process is too lengthy and urged legislation that would be faster.

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