

For more information on parental choice in education, and the courageous parents who are taking a stand and fighting for a fundamental freedom, contact:

The Illinois Educational Choice Coalition

233 East Ontario Avenue, Suite 601
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 988-9052
(312) 988-9239 (FAX)

Institute for Justice

1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 200 South
Washington, D.C. 20004-2505

8. FUND WHAT YOU CAN TRUST, DEFUND WHAT YOU CAN'T

If you're a parent who distrusts what the moguls in Hollywood and on Madison Avenue have in mind for your children, or who believes that the federal government is unlikely to make a positive difference for children, you may be many other things but you are not alone. In a national poll of 1,075 adults done by the Wirthlin group for the Family Research Council right after Election Day 1992, respondents rated the impact of various social institutions on children on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 as most positive.

Of the six institutions rated, only two received overall negative responses from the sample — the federal government and the entertainment industry. The others — especially youth organizations and churches — received overall positive ratings. One factor in this result may simply be separation: parents tend to trust institutions closer to home over which they feel they exercise some degree of control. Parents may see more remote institutions, like the national government and the movie and record industries, operating on the basis of their own, not parents', needs and priorities.

It seems more likely, however, that something more than remoteness and lack of control is at work — in fact, many parents are seeing in these agencies an active hostility to their concerns, from a federal government that promotes condom distribution programs that evade parental knowledge to an entertainment industry that fights tooth-and-nail such proposals as record labeling that warn parents of the contents of youth-market hits like George Michael's "I Want Your Sex."

Parents can respond to these trends in ways that promote parental rights directly, as described above, or they can do so indirectly by seeking to diminish the overall influence of hostile institutions.

Take government, for example. While many of the nation's problems worsen, from crime and welfare dependency to the rate of family break-up, government at all levels continues to grow. The chart on page 18 shows the increase in the share of the U.S. gross national product (GNP) consumed by government. That share has steadily risen since 1954, including during the Reagan era of the 1980s, contrary to the impression given by the media.

Much of this spending is self-reinforcing. As economic incentives for families to dissolve (or never to form) increase, demand for government programs rises. This is especially true in the welfare arena, where a decision to marry by a low-income, cohabiting couple can cost them as much as \$5,000 per year in income. But it is just as true in a more subtle way with middle-class entitlements. The struggling, over-taxed family of today often cannot save enough money to finance a child's college education, but that child can borrow those taxes back from the government in the form of guaranteed student loans. Not only does the family's dependence on government increase, but young people embark on their careers with significant debt that often discourages and defers marriage and the establishment of families.

Government waste and excess spending are a powerful drain on the economic freedom and independence of families. For information on steps parents can take to influence government to reduce its budget and live within it, contact:

Citizens Against Government Waste

Department SDS
1301 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
1-800-232-6479 (Be Angry), for newsletter and membership information.

Citizens for a Sound Economy

1250 H Street, N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 783-3870