Mar 16 2012

SALT LAKE CITY - After meaningful review and deliberation, Governor Gary R. Herbert vetoed House Bill 363, Health Education Amendments, tonight. To explain his decision, the Governor provides the following statement:

"As Governor, as a parent, and as a grandparent of children in Utah's public schools, I consider it important that the topic of human sexuality instruction be approached with utmost care and sensitivity. This topic is best taught in the home, and our public schools should not and cannot replace instruction by parents. It is imperative that public school instruction never supplant, but rather support and supplement, lessons learned in the home.

"Any attempt by the State to instruct in this area must respect two principles: (1) The curriculum must stress the importance of abstinence as the only sure method to avoid the negative effects of premarital sexual activity; and (2) The State must not interfere with a parent's right and obligation to determine if and how their children will be instructed.

"After careful review of existing law and following extensive discussions with stakeholders on both sides of the issue, I am convinced the existing statutory framework respects these two principles, while HB 363 simply goes too far by constricting parental options.

"Utah Code Section 53A-13-101 currently requires that public school instruction stress "the importance of abstinence from all sexual activity before marriage and fidelity after marriage" as well as the "personal skills that encourage individual choice of abstinence and fidelity." Current law prohibits any instruction that advocates sexual activity outside of marriage, in addition to any message that advocates or encourages the use of contraceptives.

"Existing law respects the ability of Utah parents to choose if and how their student will receive classroom instruction on these topics. Under current law, a parent must opt in, in writing, before their student can attend all or any portions of any class discussing human sexuality. If HB 363 were to become law, parents would no longer have the option the overwhelming majority is currently choosing for their children. I am unwilling to conclude that the State knows better than Utah's parents as to what is best for their children.

"In order for parents to take on more responsibility, they need more information, more involvement, and more choice-not less. I cannot sign a bill that deprives parents of their choice."

http://www.utah.gov/governor/news_media/article.html?article=6797