



Friend or foe? You need to know

By Jim Waters

Opposites may attract when it comes to love. But just the opposite holds true at the political soap opera known as the annual gathering of Kentucky's Legislature.

On one side sit those who support sound policies put forward for the good of all Kentuckians, the "friends of freedom."

On the other side sit those determined to pursue policies that diminish liberty by increasing government control in our lives, the "foes of freedom."

Occasionally, we're going to issue a list of "friends" and "foes" of freedom. Here's the first offering:

Friend: Sen. David Williams for his straightforward push to eliminate the expensive – and largely useless – student-testing system known as CATS.

Williams sponsored Senate Bill 1, which would eliminate this experiment in failure and replace it with a national test that offers objective, prompt feedback on each student's progress. The new test uses multiple-choice questions to determine if students are learning the important academic fundamentals – something CATS does not tell us.

Williams called the CATS testing system "ineffectual" and chastised top education officials for playing hooky on important Senate committee hearings about CATS.

Compared to the warm fuzzies usually handed out in the bureaucracy, Williams' assessment offered rare straight talk on education in Frankfort.

Foe: All those who voted against SB 1 – and Amy Barkley.

Okay, so Amy doesn't have anything to do with SB 1. Still, she represents an example of well-intentioned Kentuckians whose ideas come with unintended consequences that pose threats to our freedom.

I like Amy. Not all foes of liberty come in mean-spirited packages. Amy does not.

She's a genuinely nice person who serves as director for the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids in Kentucky. This group thinks picking on smokers by raising their taxes can solve all the state's money and health problems.

Amy sincerely believes that government must keep people from smoking and help free those already hooked. She defends her group's primary position: Increasing the cigarette tax discourages smoking. Yet, she emphasized in her recent Courier-Journal op-ed that Beshear should change his no-new-taxes pledge in light of the state's "staggering shortfall" in revenue.

That requires a big double take.

C'mon Amy. Is this really about the health of kids or bailing out a government with uncontrollable spending habits? It's the latter that poses the real threat to the future of *all* our kids.

Friend: Anyone who attended last week's rally for school choice in the Capitol Rotunda, including Reps. Stan Lee, Jim DeCesare, Brad Montell, Mike Harmon and Tim Moore.

These courageous legislators reject pressure from teachers unions, which would deny in any way, shape or form giving Kentucky parents a choice about where their children go to school. All five lawmakers spoke eloquently in support of educational competition.

I predict that those who fight for parental choice now will reap the political benefits later. School choice continues to gain popularity. Those who support school choice and common-sense education reform will land on top.

Foe: California Judge H. Walt Croskey tops the current "unpopular" list among supporters of home schooling.

Croskey wrote the majority opinion on an appellate court ruling last week that would turn California's home-schooling parents into criminals. These parents, he wrote, "do not have a constitutional right to home school their children."

OBJECTION, YOUR HONOR!

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that teachers unions "applauded" this constitutionally challenged court ruling.

I don't often have nightmares. But when I do, it's of one of Frankfort's far-flung lefties trying to score a point or two with the teachers union by trampling on the liberties of thousands of Kentucky's home-schooling parents.

As a home-schooling parent, I can only advise that such thoughts be allowed to pass, unentertained. Take it from this friend of freedom: To do otherwise would be a huge mistake.

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