

## MIKE HUCKABEE'S HOMESCHOOL RECORD

It is a common accusation (originating from Ron Paul's official website) that Governor Huckabee had an anti-homeschool record in Arkansas. This is patently untrue.

Besides being the first Governor to appoint a homeschooler to the State Board of Education, here is Mike Huckabee's record on homeschooling from the HSLDA's Court Report.

In 1996, as Lieutenant Governor, Mike Huckabee intervened on behalf of homeschoolers:

*Intervention by **Lieutenant Governor Mike Huckabee** on behalf of home schoolers who missed the state fee deadline for standardized achievement tests resulted in the families being given another opportunity to pay and have their children tested at a later date.*

*Both families had been notified by Yvette Dillingham, Home Schools Program Support Manager for the Arkansas Department of Education, that state law prohibited them from participating in the standardized testing program because of their failure to pay for the state's tests by the deadline. In addition, Ms. Dillingham informed the parents that since their children would not be able to satisfy the testing requirement, the families would be prohibited from home schooling during the 1996-97 school year.*

*Having previously heard of the **lieutenant governor's** interest in other non-member home schoolers facing this same problem, Mr. Black telephoned Tom Holiman, Executive Director of the Arkansas Christian Home Education Association (ACHEA), to discuss the position held by the Department of Education. In a two-pronged strategy, Mr. Holiman contacted the **lieutenant governor's** office on behalf of the HSLDA families, while Mr. Black faxed a letter to Mrs. Dillingham setting forth HSLDA's interpretation of state law. A copy of Mr. Black's letter was also faxed to the **lieutenant governor's** office.*

*Within 24 hours of being contacted by [HSLDA attorneys], **Lieutenant Governor Huckabee** sent a letter to Gene Wilhoit, Director of the Department of Education, seeking administrative relief for those parents who had inadvertently missed the deadline for payment of the test expense. **Lieutenant Governor Huckabee** recommended that these parents be permitted to make late payment, so their children could be tested at a make-up test session for families in this predicament. In his letter of April 19, 1996, to Mr. Wilhoit, **Lieutenant Governor Huckabee** said:*

*"I understand that rules and deadlines are necessary to the efficient functioning of any administrative body. But failure to send payment shouldn't be seen as irresponsibility on the part of the parents. These parents often go 'beyond the call of duty' by devoting a major portion of their lives toward the education of their children. These same parents would not intentionally or haphazardly disregard the administrative procedures that enable them to home-school their children in the first place."*

*On Monday, April 22, 1996, three days after receiving the **Lieutenant Governor's** letter, the Department of Education agreed to permit late payment of the test expense and scheduled a special make-up testing date for these families. The home schooling families of Arkansas owe **Lieutenant Governor Huckabee** a debt of gratitude for his intervention on their behalf in successfully appealing to the Department of Education to change its position.*

<http://www.hslda.org/courtreport/V12N3/V12N3AR.asp>

In 1997, Governor Mike Huckabee strongly supported and signed a bill overturning restrictive homeschooling laws:

*With the enthusiastic support and assistance of **Governor Mike Huckabee**, the General Assembly enacted House Bill 1157 as Act 400 of 1997, revolutionizing the law governing home schools in Arkansas. Arkansas home school families' interests were tremendously advanced through the passage of H.B. 1157. With this legislation, Arkansas was transformed from one of the most restrictive states in the nation into one of the most favorable.*

<http://www.hslda.org/courtreport/V13N3/V13N3AR.asp>

So on what basis does Mr. Fisk attack Governor Huckabee's record? Well, he'll tell you it's based on HB 1724 in 1999, which did increase restrictions on homeschool families, was signed by Huckabee, and was opposed by the HSLDA. But here's the context he leaves out:

*[HB 1724 was] sponsored by Representative Jim Magnus (R-55), a home schooling father from Little Rock... The public school lobby had been working overtime to convince the Arkansas legislature that the home school law was too permissive. Their efforts paid off and home schoolers were informed by unfriendly legislators that the home school law was going to be changed. In an effort to forestall unbearably hostile and restrictive legislation, the home school leaders decided to introduce their own bill.*

[...]

#### *What Did the Previous Law Require?*

*Originally enacted in 1985 under then-Governor Bill Clinton, Arkansas' home school law recognized the right of parents to teach their children at home, but imposed considerable restrictions, especially for special education. In 1997, due largely to the efforts of **Governor Mike Huckabee**, Arkansas revised the law creating a much more favorable environment for home educators.*

<http://www.hslda.org/courtreport/v15n3/V15N3AR.asp>

The other bill, HB 2037, put forth by Democrat Representative Jerry Allison, is described by this article in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette on March 9, 1999:

*House Bill 2037 requires that home-schooling parents:*

*Hold classes at least 180 days a year.*

*Upgrade the curriculum each year based on state recommendations.*

*Provide class plans and daily records of student activity.*

*Notify the local school superintendent 14 days before parents begin each school semester.*

*Under Allison's bill, parents would need at least a high school diploma before they can home school. Opponents said that requirement would eliminate second-generation home-schoolers from teaching.*

*In a recent Jonesboro Sun article about his bill, Allison was quoted as saying he wanted to be sure that children weren't being pulled from public schools to be home schooled just because "parents are too lazy to take them there."*

*"Many of you mothers here were insulted by the suggestion that you are too lazy to take your kids to school," Lynn Childers, president of Christian Home Educators of Arkansas, told the group Monday. "I am offended."*

*Childers urged the crowd, mostly home-schooling mothers and their children, to call Allison and ask him to withdraw his proposal.*

*"I'm trying to protect the children," Allison said when reached at the state Capitol on Monday afternoon. "We've got to have some accountability. Those children [who attended Monday's press conference] should have been in school."*

*Randy Sharp, executive director of the American Family Association of Craighead County, said Allison fought a bill two years ago that lifted restrictions on home-schoolers. Sharp said he suspected Allison's bill is a vendetta against home-schoolers who opposed Allison in 1997.*

*Sharp said home-schooling enrollment increased from 6,000 to 9,000 children in the past two years since restrictions were lifted. Children who were home schooled also scored higher on the Scholastic Assessment Tests and the ACT than their counterparts in public schools, he said.*

*"This shows something is right about home schooling," Sharp said. "Mr. Allison seems to be the only one who doesn't understand that."*

*Allison said Monday he had no intention of withdrawing his bill.*

*"They can kiss my foot," he said.*

The bill that Huckabee ultimately signed in 1999, for which he has been attacked by Ron Paul supporters, was a bill put forth by a homeschooling father and supported by homeschool groups in Arkansas—as the HSLDA report explained—and was a defensive measure to prevent Rep. Allison's bill from returning homeschooling regulations to pre-1997 days.

Again, from the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette on March 12, 1999:

*The House Education Committee picked the less stringent of two bills to tighten home schooling rules Thursday, bringing applause from 250 home school parents and children at the meeting.*

*The committee recommended House Bill 1724 by Rep. Jim Magnus, R-Little Rock.*

According to the Education Alliance, Arkansas's statewide homeschool advocacy group, in 2006:

*For years, a small handful of lawmakers have wanted to enact more regulation on home schoolers. **Mike Huckabee** held many of those lawmakers at bay by simply informing them that he would be displeased if they did anything to harm his home school friends. I do not expect Mike Beebe to stand up for home schoolers the way **Mike Huckabee** did.*

<http://sbees.blogspot.com/2006/11/arkansas-comparing-homeschool-and.html#c116398584657055977>

From all accounts—from the HSLDA and to Arkansas homeschoolers—it is obvious that laws in Arkansas towards homeschoolers are considerably better than they would have been if it were not for Huckabee's faithful and consistent support in the face of a hostile Democrat legislature.