

RECEIVED

2008 JUN 23 AM 11:45

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION**THE YORK DISPATCH.****EDITORIAL: Stick to issue of testing**

May 28, 2008

The state Department of Education's 30-day public comment period on the proposed Graduation Competency Assessments tests expires June 16.

Along with school property tax increases and legislation seeking to outlaw public school teacher strikes, the proposed state mandate has set the Pennsylvania School Boards Association -- you know, those "local control now and forever" types -- squarely against perceived government interference.

The strangest -- and clearly the most specious -- argument against the testing proposal is that students will be "overtested," that such assessments aren't "fair" and would hurt student achievement.

Take the attitude of Fred Botterbusch, a school boards association vice president and also a Dallastown Area School District board vice president, who says testing for diplomas by this method is a "19th -century concept."

That's a bit of a stretch. Competency is competency, period. But as the cries of infringement on local boards' powers grow, it's clear the heart of the issue goes beyond "overtesting."

Karl Girton, chairman of the State Board of Education, says the objective of the assessments is simple, to ensure equal standards for high school graduates.

Unfortunately, the question of whether high school seniors should, or should not, be further tested for competency before graduation has become lost in the age-old squabble over local control vs. state interference.

This is politics clear and simple, and the school boards are dragging out the well-worn argument as their best defense.

Testing frequencies, student competency and their effect on individual performance are complex issues. Reducing the controversy to an us-against-them donnybrook disrespects the students and their future.