

"HSLDA? Yeah, I know you guys. You helped shut down Capitol Hill that one time." That event was 25 years ago, back when I was rolling around in pink onesies on my parents' carpet, rather than meeting with congressional staff as HSLDA's lobbyist. And the chief of staff in front of me now had been an intern on the Hill back then, fielding phone calls from angry homeschool families on a day that neither he nor anyone else in Washington had ever forgotten.

Every few years, Congress passes public education funding bills that typically have zero effect on homeschool students. But 1994 wasn't a typical year. That year, one little sentence, which would have jeopardized the ability of millions of families to homeschool, was added to the bill: that states would have to ensure that each full-time teacher was certified to teach the subject they were teaching.

Another congressman tried to introduce an amendment clarifying that this teacher certification wouldn't apply to private schools or homeschools. But the committee shot down that language, removing any doubt that this bill, House Resolution 6, was a direct threat to homeschooling.

Thus began the Battle of H.R. 6.

With a final vote only nine days away, HSLDA kicked into high gear. Fax alerts (yes, these were the olden days!) were sent to all members, summarizing the situation and outlining a six-step plan for contacting their congressmen and spreading the message to friends and neighbors. Over the next 24 hours, tens of thousands of copies of that alert were distributed across America. Phone lines were abuzz, thanks to state and local homeschool leaders. HSLDA's Mike Farris appeared on CBN and other news shows to spread the word about the dangers of H.R. 6.

Then came THAT day: the day the homeschoolers shut down the Capitol switchboard.

Tens of thousands of calls flooded congressional offices. When congressmen went home to their districts over the weekend, they were bombarded by constituents demanding action.

On Tuesday, homeschoolers once again jammed the switchboards. Work at the Capitol screeched to a halt. Many congressmen had a difficult time reaching their own staff via telephone. Switchboard operators said they'd never seen this kind of response to any other bill, ever. Some in DC didn't know that homeschooling was something people did, and now this tiny minority of home educators had brought Washington to a standstill.

The committee was convinced to take up the amendment to exempt homeschoolers from the teacher-certification provision. It passed overwhelmingly.

The Battle of H.R. 6 wasn't won by HSLDA but by the sheer number of passionate parents and families nationwide who took action. Because of HSLDA's presence in DC, we were able to inform the homeschool movement of the pending threat and the need to get involved. We got the ball rolling, and all of you took it and ran with it, straight to the phone lines.

HSLDA Action carries on the legacy of that historic victory. Longtime Capitol Hill staff know me not because of my name, but because of the organization I represent and the work we've done to preserve homeschool freedom. They'll never forget the day that Congress stood still.

But the task of preserving education freedom is never-ending. Today, HSLDA Action continues to educate, inform, and empower people like you to stand up for liberty. Will you join us in our cause?

  
Maggie McKneely  
FEDERAL RELATIONS LIAISON,  
HSLDA ACTION



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