

[This report aired September 29, 2004 on HORIZON.]

**In-Studio Guests:**

• Tom Dorn, Arizona Charter Schools Association

>>> Michael Grant:

There is one proposition on the ballot that is getting little attention, Proposition 105. Still, some have a stake in the measure, charter school advocates. The proposition would change the makeup of the State Board of Education, adding two members, a layperson and a person representing charter schools to the 8-member board. In a moment, we'll talk about that. First, details of proposition 105.

>> Reporter Merry Lucero:

The State Board of Education regulates and has general supervision over the conduct of the public school system. The board is currently made up of the state superintendent of public instruction and eight members appointed by the Governor. The president of a state university or college, a superintendent of a high school district, a classroom teacher, a county school superintendent, three public members and a member of the state junior college board. Proposition 105 would amend the Arizona constitution by changing the makeup of the board and increasing the membership from 9 to 11. A president or chancellor of a community college district would replace the member of the state junior college board. One additional public member would be added, as well as one owner or administrator of a charter school. Joining me is Tom Dorn. He represents the Arizona Charter Schools Association. Tom, we searched high and low and we couldn't find a spokesman for no on proposition 105.

>> Thomas Dorn:  
That's fine with me.

>> Michael Grant:  
All right. Why should people vote yes on proposition 105?

>> Thomas Dorn:  
Well, the charter schools, the number of students in charter schools is now around 76,000 and growing. It's getting larger every year. When you have around 900,000 students in the public school system, we roughly make up about 8-10% of students in public schools. So we find it appropriate that they be included on the State Board of Education since that's the policy-making board.

>> Michael Grant:  
Why the extra public member.

>> Thomas Dorn:  
Superintendent Horne wanted an uneven number and the legislature took care of that.

>> Michael Grant:  
Tom Horne anticipating a lot of deadlocked 5-5 votes or?

>> Thomas Dorn:  
I don't know, may be.

>> Michael Grant: Why couldn't the interests or why aren't the interests of charter schools adequately represented with sort of the mix of representation that you have currently?

>> Thomas Dorn:  
Well, I'm not saying they are not. Actually, the State Board of Education does a fine job with regard to charter school issues. We just find it would be helpful to have some charter school expertise, people actually in the field working in charter schools as an owner or administrator. It helps give a different perspective when they are making policy that affects all students. So we find -- like we say, we find it very appropriate. And the legislation also had no problem with it. They passed it through almost unanimously, I believe, and as well as the district schools, they voiced no opposition during the legislative debate on it.

>> Michael Grant:  
Tom, give us a broad overview, because I don't think a lot of people know what the State Board of Education actually does. You have a superintendent of public instruction, you have county superintendents of schools, you have the Board of Regents. You have a variety of different entities and individuals. Where does the State Board of Education fit in this entire scheme?

>> Thomas Dorn:  
I'm no expert on the State Board of Ed, you want to talk to someone like Crissy Farley who runs it or the superintendent himself, but we just find that they are the policy making body. They are not the regulatory body for charter schools, but the policy-making body for the education system. That's why we find it -- we really want to be part of it.

>> Michael Grant:  
Well, for example, I know that the AIMS test policies have been taken to the State Board of Education. I believe also they

deal with curriculum matters and those kinds of things?

>> Thomas Dorn:  
Exactly.

>> Michael Grant:  
Those sorts of policies? Now, in relation to those policies, though, I guess what I'm struggling with partly is how decisions would be made differently in relation to curriculum policies and those kinds of things for charter schools as opposed to for public schools? We do want a fairly uniform school system.

>> Thomas Dorn:  
Well, it is uniform. Charter schools are public schools. They are privately operated public schools. So the curriculum matters are the same. It's just you do have district representation on the State Board of Education, so we want to make sure there is also charter representation. If you add up all of the schools in the State of Arizona that are public schools, one quarter of them are actually charter schools, because we have 493 charter schools in the State of Arizona.

>> Michael Grant:  
Okay. And that number, if I recall correctly, has been growing rather rapidly. When did charter schools --

>> Thomas Dorn:  
We are coming up on our 10-year celebration here in 2004. We're having a conference here at the end of the month at the Hyatt downtown and Governor Napolitano is going to be there to give a proclamation celebrating 10 years of charters.

>> Michael Grant:  
So literally from 0 to -- what was the number that you gave me in the 10 years?

>> Thomas Dorn:  
The last number was 493. That's the last number I have.

>> Michael Grant:  
Well, proposition 105, Tom Dorn, I appreciate you joining us and talking about it.

>> Thomas Dorn:  
Thank you very much, Michael.