



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on February 23, 2011

Mississippi House Passes Bill To Track Children

The Mississippi House has passed H.B. 608 providing for the establishment of a longitudinal data system to track education and student outcomes in the workforce which will require a multi-agency database. According to the PPJ Gazette for Feb. 21, this means tracking Mississippians from cradle to grave — almost.



Under the bill, several Mississippi state agencies will join in an interagency cooperation to track children from birth to workforce. The multiple databases will be combined into one database making information available to interested parties. Neither the legislation nor the *Gazette* article identified the “interested parties.”

PPJG wrote:

The system shall allow stakeholders and policymakers to access data on state residents from birth to the workforce to drive accountability and investment decisions.

Funding is to come from the Federal Department of Education.

The measure was heavily supported by Parents Campaign, a non-partisan grassroots network with the stated goal of “seeking to ensure a quality education for all Mississippi children.”

But *PPJG* author Lynne Swearingen questioned if Parents’ Campaign, PTAs, and other Mississippi parents understood the intrusive nature of this legislation, or “the personal freedoms that will be surrendered” under it. She also wondered about a system of digital tracking that would ensure “if students needed help, the tracking would make sure it was offered.” Swearingen did not elaborate on the particular data-gathering methods, or devices for determining need or what kind of help would be offered.

With the budgets of Mississippi and other state cracking under heavy debt loads, Swearingen believes that not only should federal money not be accepted for an expensive project whose outcome is iffy, but that the implications of mandatory longitudinal studies are not good. Though integrated data bases now make such data storage easier, an increasing number of parents and others may question the wisdom of using them for this purpose.

Parents everywhere are encouraged to monitor this trend if their children are enrolled in government schools.



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