

✓CF Cabrillo RP
**Anti-voucher
video exhibit at
Cabrillo angers
taxpayer group**

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A taxpayer advocacy group is fuming over Cabrillo College instructors playing an anti-school voucher video for students and is threatening to take the matter to court.

Lee Phelps, a representative for the Alliance of California Taxpayers and Involved Voters, said Cabrillo instructors have played a video in the classroom that presents a "biased, one-sided view" of Proposition 174, which will appear on the November ballot. If approved by the voters, the voucher plan would give parents \$2,600 per child, per year, to be used toward private school tuition and costs.

Phelps said ACTIV is "exploring" the possibility of state and federal legal action against the school and the instructors.

He said Cabrillo is a public institution funded by public money, and should be engaged in presenting a "balanced" perspective on ideas. Using the classroom to show an anti-voucher video is a violation of his First and Fourteenth Amendment rights, Phelps said, because it denies him the opportunity to present his views.

Phelps has not seen the video, but added he has seen enough of "those type" of videos. He said many anti-voucher materials, including videos, have been produced with money provided by the state's teachers unions. He said

See VIDEO / back of section ▶

✓CF Cabrillo College 1990 -

VIDEO

▶ From Page 1

the unions have spent more than \$10 million to fight the initiative.

ACTIV is willing to show its own video on the voucher initiative, Phelps said. "It is balanced," he said. ACTIV could also make some of its members available to speak on the voucher initiative to classes at Cabrillo or any other group or organization. No one from Cabrillo, however, has contacted ACTIV, he said.

"I don't think anyone there doesn't know who we are," Phelps said. "And we're in the phone book."

T. Mike Walker, an English instructor, said he and another English instructor, Stan Rushworth, showed the 11-minute video in their class once. Both he and Rushworth also provided the class with a package of printed pro-voucher material the day the video was shown. The pro-voucher ma-

terial Walker used was produced by a statewide parents' organization.

Both the video and the printed material were used to spur a debate among students, said Walker, who is president of the Cabrillo College Federation of Teachers.

"We were using (the video) as a centerpiece for discussion," Walker said.

The video was produced by the California Federation of Teachers, one of the largest teachers' unions in the state. The video shows several people speaking on the voucher initiative, including state controller Gary Davis and Joseph Alibrandi, a Southern California businessman and one of the original drafters of the initiative.

The classroom, Walker said, should be a place where controversial issues are discussed.

"If you can't do it there, where is our democracy going?" Walker said.

Walker admitted he did not invite ACTIV members to his class. But neither has ACTIV invited him

to discuss his views on the voucher initiative, he said.

Voucher backers have taken legal action against two public school districts in the state for allegedly using school resources to operate an anti-voucher campaign.

Yesterday, representatives of "Yes on 174" filed a suit in Orange County Superior Court against Tustin Unified and Brea-Olinda Unified for allegedly misusing public funds to publish a "fact sheet" and engage in a campaign against the voucher initiative.

The suit objects to fact sheets mailed or sent home with children, and alleges teachers and administrators illegally used school resources to oppose the measure.

"It's outrageous that they think they can use children as vehicles to spread this type of propaganda," said Sean Walsh, director of communications for "Yes on 174."

Both districts have denied any wrongdoing.

The suit asks the court to bar the districts from using taxpayer money to oppose the measure and

seeks reimbursement from district officials.

Public employees are prohibited by law from using state resources to push a political cause.

"We broke no laws," said Superintendent David Andrews of Tustin Unified School District. "There's really nothing more to say."

Ed Seal of the Brea-Olinda Unified School District said the PTA or an action group may have put together Prop. 174 literature, but not the district.

Seal acknowledged giving parents "fact sheets" listing pros and cons without taking a side on the question. Andrews said he also made a fact sheet available.

Walsh said voucher initiative backers have so far compiled 28 examples statewide of what they saw as legal violations and complained to the state attorney general about two weeks ago. They were told there was not enough evidence to prosecute, but were encouraged to seek civil remedies.

Register-Pajaronian wire services contributed to this story.

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