

Why is the Warwick School Board Meeting with the Independence Law Center?

Recently, the President and Vice President of the Warwick School Board of Directors met with Randall Wenger, Chief Counsel and COO of the Independence Law Center (ILC). This follows scrutiny by the media and community members over meetings that school board members Emily Zimmerman (current board president), Scott Landis (current VP), James Koelsch and Daniel Woolley had with Wenger last year.

Warwick School District already has two board-approved solicitors who offer legal advice to the district. So why are school board members now meeting with this litigious, activist law firm?

WHAT STRINGS ARE ATTACHED?



YORK

Dover school district parents worry this is a sequel to 2005: 'Free' legal help that 'cost \$1 million,' and 'chaos and anger'

by: Seth Kaplan
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ILC gets in the door by offering its services “pro bono,” with promises to write policies for the district on books and curriculum, bathroom policies, and other LGBTQ+ issues, but across Pennsylvania these “free” policies have been very costly to taxpayers.

In Bucks County, ILC helped Central Bucks School District draft policies that ended up costing approximately \$1.75 million to defend.

(Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, “Duane Morris billed Central Bucks \$1.75 million to address anti-LGBTQ complaints,” Dec. 1, 2023)

Randall Wenger has also been connected to Dover School District in York County, where a lawsuit over intelligent design cost taxpayers \$1 million.

(Source: ABC27 News, “Dover school district parents worry this is a sequel to 2005: ‘Free’ legal help that ‘cost \$1 million,’ and ‘chaos and anger, March 7, 2024)

ILC also likes to sue school districts who don’t conform to their narrow worldview, such as when they sued Boyertown Area School District in 2017 (and lost).

ILC doesn’t care about the dollars they cost school districts ... or students ... in fact, one could say that they hope to cost school districts money because getting to court is the goal.

As the Bucks County Beacon put it in an article on March 5, 2024 ...

“... They’re free because at the end of the day, they aren’t working for the district that “hires” them, but for the leaders and quiet donors of the Pennsylvania Family Institute ... If ILC turns up in your district, that’s the goal.”

.@PFIPolicy legal arm Independence Law Center's Randall Wenger said school board members shouldn't mention religious motivations during meetings [to hide right-wing Christian agenda.] "I think we need to do a better job at being clever as serpents." #BucksCounty #Pennsylvania

 York Dispatch @YorkDispatch

The ILC's chief counsel was one of the attorneys who filed briefs in the 2004 case that cost the district \$1 million after a judge ruled that intelligent design was not science and could not be mentioned in biology classes. yorkdispatch.com/story/news/edu... via @YorkDispatch

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"CLEVER AS SERPENTS"



FACTS ABOUT THE INDEPENDENCE LAW CENTER

Independence Law Center is a Harrisburg-based legal advocacy group that claims to stand up for "religious liberty," though much of their focus is on restricting access to library books and adopting policies that target LGBTQ+ students in our **public** schools.

- ILC is the legal arm of the Pennsylvania Family Institute, which has ties to the Family Research Council, a Virginia-based evangelical activist group that the Southern Poverty Law Center labels an "anti-LGBTQ hate group."
- Though he tries to distance himself from the hate group label, Randall Wenger, chief counsel for the ILC, has appeared several times on the Family Research Council's online talk show, and Pennsylvania Family Institute, where Wenger serves as chief operating officer, is featured on the Family Research Council's website as a state-level "family policy council,"
Source: LNP/LancasterOnline "'Not a hate group': Warwick school board members defend meeting with lawyer tied to anti-LGBTQ+ council," published April 22, 2023).
- Lawsuits are the goal because Wenger wants to change case law and get his name in the news. His YouTube videos make this clear.
- When a district signs an agreement with the ILC, they are also agreeing that when they get sued, ILC will be the ones representing them in court (this is outlined in their contracts).
- **Along with potentially costing school districts millions of dollars, the work done by the Independence Law Center does irreparable harm to students.**



"The impact for students in these districts is really harmful, homophobic and transphobic policies and school climate," said Kristina Moon, senior staff attorney with the Education Law Center in an interview with the Philadelphia Inquirer. **Our students deserve better.**

PLEASE EMAIL SCHOOLBOARD@WARWICKSD.ORG AND ASK THEM TO "SAY NO" TO INDEPENDENCE LAW CENTER! YOU CAN ALSO ATTEND SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS ON THE THIRD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 7 P.M. EMAIL BOARDSECRETARY@WARWICKSD.ORG BY 3:30 P.M. ON THE DAY OF THE MEETING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD.