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School Patrons Have More Power Now

PUBLIC school patrons still are complaining about the use of textbooks they consider to be objectionable.

Some of them offer to show collections of books and teaching materials to prove their case. There is no question that such obscene, anti-American and anti-religious publications exist in our schools.

The debate, therefore, is not whether such materials are present but over the question of their official use in classrooms.

The National Education Association, American Civil Liberties Union and other supporters of controversial textbooks base their positions largely upon a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, written in 1957 by Justice Brennan.

It says that works with "even the slightest redeeming social importance" shall have full protection of the Constitution, even if they are "hateful to the prevailing climate of public opinion."

The crux of the argument is censorship, which is a standoff. Libertarians want to ban the Bible, moral

principles and free enterprise materials. Conservative groups insist that secular humanism, the theory of evolution and Marxism ought not to be taught.

Oklahoma school patrons should remember that they have greater means available for influencing what their children are being taught this year than they have had in the past.

As a result of efforts put forth by a coalition of urban and rural organizations responding to parental objections, the Oklahoma Legislature passed resolutions and enacted laws in 1981 and 1982 that could afford substantial relief, if put into use.

The Legislature adopted a resolution recommending that the state textbook commission approve only materials that are objective and impartial, which teach the work ethic and absolute values of right and wrong, and which support the home, family and religion.

The Legislature passed a law giving parents the right to inspect teaching materials used for instruc-

tion of their children.

The Legislature passed a law prohibiting psychological and other experiments involving children except with parents' consent.

The Legislature passed a law giving local school boards authority to accept or reject approved textbooks and teaching materials.

The Legislature passed a law eliminating the controversial "values clarification" studies project.

The Legislature passed a law authorizing local school boards to establish rules of discipline that should enable administrators and teachers to quell disruptive, disrespectful students.

Parents who have problems should make their difficulties known. If teachers or local school boards fail to respond, it may be necessary to recruit additional parental support. If their cause is just, parents eventually may gain their points.

The battle is for the minds, bodies and souls of the children. Parents ought not merely stand on the sidelines.