



Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Fwd: Some still find school report card offensive

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Fri, Nov 2, 2018 at 7:54 AM

November board meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Nov 2, 2018 at 2:03 AM
Subject: Some still find school report card offensive
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To view the web version, [click here](#).**Some still find school report card offensive**

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

How do you find your school on the Illinois Report Card? There's a video tutorial for that. How about finding out the student demographics at your school? The district environment? What academic progress means? The administrators at your school? How your school compares with other schools?

There are video [tutorials that answer questions](#) about all of that. You say you want 25 pages of statewide data, all the metrics relating to students enrolled, their racial and socioeconomic characteristics, their academic performance, the districts, the teachers, etc., etc., in a pdf format? [It's all right here](#).

The interactive pages on the Illinois State Board of Education's report card site are a profound improvement as a data source over strips of paper with columns of figures that I obtained from the agency at the start of ISNS in 1995, paper that was torn and coffee-stained before school was out for the year.

Anyone with Internet access can quickly review information about any school district in the state, any school in the state, complete with the names of their leaders, their addresses and phone numbers, the district's financial status, the students' performance, absenteeism, graduation rates. It's encyclopedic.

My children all graduated from Springfield High School. On the [district's "snapshot" page](#), I learn that there are now about 14,300 students; 68% of whom are low-income;

nearly 300 are homeless; of the 1,012 teachers, by far most are white and female; the district would need \$190 million to adequately educate its children - but it has only \$130 million. My children's high school is rated "commendable," as are the two schools that feed into it.

That's where the controversy comes in. Not all schools are "commendable." Only 18 of Springfield SD 186 schools are given that high of a rating; seven others are called "underperforming"; six others are said to be among the state's "lowest performing schools." None of the district's schools are called "exemplary."

As WEBZ91.5, the great Chicago [public broadcast station reports](#), those two bottom rungs on the performance ladder, "underperforming" and "lowest performing schools," evoked some push-back from school officials even as the highly respected former school district superintendent Ralph Grimm assured them that "this is not No Child Left Behind. This is not blame, shame, and punish." (Grimm is Acting Chief Education Officer for ISBE.)

Educators at a meeting in Melrose Park last week complained to Grimm about the low designations, particularly the "underperforming" label. It is very easy to get stuck with; having any subgroup perform on the bottom 5% statewide will do it. Hundreds of schools' images suffer despite excellence in other respects.

"If we're trying to attract teachers to our schools that have the most need," using such labels is not the way to do it, an assistant district superintendent (with no "underperforming" schools in her district) told Grimm. "I would encourage that we ... stop doing this to schools," she said. "We just can't do this anymore."

This has been a controversial issue, of course, in all the years of the "accountability" movement. A great educator, the late Lloyd Lehman, told me years ago the the primary beneficiaries of school report cards would real estate sales companies and the legislators they support. I've not heard of a good educational result.

The influence of "out-of-school" factors on students' performance remains so strong as to suggest that it might be better to label an entire town or county as "underperforming" than to put that tag on just the schools and the educators.

Davis stands by his health care lie. [Narrow-eyed U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis](#) (R-Taylorville) is one of only seven Republican congressmen who voted for a bill that would have waived insurance coverage of preexisting medical conditions - and then *told the same lie* to convince voters that they did no such thing.

Why am I picking on Davis so much? He's my congressman. I didn't like the tax-cut bill he boasted about having helped to pass, the one that gives rich folks \$1.5 trillion or more for my kids to repay. I didn't like it when he sent me slick campaign documents disguised as "information" [so us taxpayers had to pay](#) for it.

I think most media outlets are too timid about calling a lie a lie. What is a lie, anyway? It is a statement that you make while knowing at the time that it is false. Mistakes are not lies. Slips of the tongue are not lies. Intentionally misleading me, is that a lie? It sure is. Are all lies bad? When Davis tells them, yes.

Do we care about the other six congressmen who apparently got some coaching on the preexisting conditions lie? We just care about U.S. Rep. Peter Roskam (R-Wheaton), the other liar from Illinois. Davis is struggling to stay in office this year, but Roskam is said to be ["on the thinnest of political ice."](#)

Washington Post fact-checker Glenn Kessler tells us [all about the preexisting conditions lie](#). The seven congressmen who tell it are so similar in their renditions that Kessler thinks "somehow, a memo must have gone out" to tell them how to do it. (Do you believe such things happen? If not, you're naive.)

It's a two-part lie. The first is to mislead your constituents about a different healthcare bill fact-check. The second is to misstate the bill under consideration. Here's how veteran political writer Bernard Schoenburg described [Davis' response](#) to the charge that he voted to gut preexisting conditions protection:

"The lies about pre-existing condition coverage being taken away have been scored a Four Pinocchio by The Washington Post," Davis said at the debate. "Read the bill. In the bill, it specifically says, 'Nothing in this bill shall allow insurance companies to deny anyone coverage for pre-existing conditions.'"

As Kessler explained, the "Four Pinocchio" rating Davis cited was for a totally different falsehood - one about *how many people would be harmed* by the bill - not about whether harm would result. To explain that part of the lie, Kessler actually uses Davis' misstatement quoted above, beginning with "Nothing in this bill"

The actual language of the bill is this: "Nothing in this Act shall be construed as permitting health insurance issuers to limit access to health coverage for individuals with preexisting conditions." The difference is huge. Davis' version would suggest such coverage would be required, as it now is under "Obamacare."

The bill's language is just empty and cosmetic. As Kessler says, "Everyone has 'access' to buying a Tesla, but it makes a difference whether you can afford to buy it." So the rhetorical twisting required for Davis and others to argue this point *could not be achieved unknowingly*. That's what proves it's a lie.

Kessler said each of the seven liars was given a chance to change his story after being fact-checked, but none of them did. "That's dismaying. These lawmakers have been put on notice that they are peddling a falsehood - and ... [they] should acknowledge they made a mistake and offer an apology."

Attitudes about lying vary, it seems. Mark Twain saw it as an important skill. Of George Washington, he disdainfully said: "He was ignorant of the commonest accomplishments of youth. He would not even lie." Research suggests the lying skill is [acquired by age 3-and-a-half](#), but sometimes (maybe like Davis) earlier.

Does catching a candidate in a lie make a difference?

That's a good question. The political rules change over time. Being habitually honest, [like Honest Abe](#), used to be a requirement, or at least a powerful asset. So was being monogamous. But we learned in 2016 that lacking either, or even both of those traits, is by no means a disqualifier anymore.

I received an email message Wednesday from my favorite president - [Josiah Bartlet](#). Actually, it was from the actor Martin Sheen, who played Bartlet in a popular television show years ago. "Though I no longer play a fictional president," his memo said, "my concerns about the way our country is heading are very real."

"That's why I'm so excited about Betsy's campaign. She is the kind of leader who always puts hard-working families first," he added. Betsy? Who's Betsy? He was referring to [Betsy Dirksen Londrigan](#), the candidate who has a chance to unseat Davis in Tuesday's election. I hope she does just that.

By the way: Go [to your polling place](#) and VOTE Tuesday.

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