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## **NEW STUDY REVEALS HOW COLORADO'S SCHOOLS ARE PARALYZED BY AN OVER ABUNDANCE OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

Denver, CO – October 25, 2007 – Common Good Colorado, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, whose mission is to reduce the bureaucratic burden of legal rules and regulations on our health and education systems, released today the results of a new study entitled, “The New Three R’s: Rules, Regulations and More Rules.” The study, which surveyed teachers and school administrators from public schools in Colorado, is available online at [www.cgood.org/colorado](http://www.cgood.org/colorado). It provides an example of the over-legalization of public schools that has taken place nationwide.

Focus Group Resource, a focus group consulting firm based in Portland, Oregon, conducted twelve focus groups among 69 educators from rural, suburban, and urban districts across the state, including 43 teachers, 18 principals, 5 superintendents and 3 assistant principals.

The study examines the excessive burden of often counter-productive laws and regulations, the impact of legal fear on educators, and the state and local policies that impede student success. The survey also compiled suggestions from teachers and administrators on ways that legislators could ease the problem.

The key findings of the survey include:

- Legal fear is a daily reality in schools:
  - 51% of teachers said they had been threatened with a lawsuit.
  - Over 60 percent of teachers and administrators said they experienced a high to moderate fear of lawsuits;
  - The fear of litigation stems from basic tasks like assigning a grade, breaking up a fight or evaluating a teacher;
- The extent to which educators feel burdened:
  - On average they report spending 20 to 30 percent of their time on mandated activities that make little sense to them;
  - 77 percent of participants rated the extent of legal and regulatory burdens as a “5” or higher on a scale of “1” to “10”;

- Specific laws that create excessive bureaucratic responsibilities on teachers and administrators and are counter-productive to maximizing student success:
  - Teachers and administrators commented specifically on complicated, time-consuming and often counterproductive procedures related to implementing multiple accountability systems, disciplining disruptive students, removing less than satisfactory teachers from the classroom, and meeting the needs of special education students.

“The burden of law on educators is staggering,” said Elaine Gantz Berman, board member of Common Good Colorado, “As teachers and principals are forced to spend more of their time fulfilling mandates and procedures, they have less energy, eagerness, and time to educate.”

“Educating children should be the main priority for teachers, not complying with mandates,” said Philip Howard, chairman of Common Good. “We should allow educators to use their judgment and then hold them accountable.”

“As parents and citizens, it is our duty to ease these excesses so educators can focus on teaching Colorado’s kids,” said Jerry Wartgow, board member of Common Good Colorado.

This survey is part of an ongoing series by Common Good and Common Good Colorado. A 2004 study by Common Good found that more than 60 separate sources of laws and regulations, with thousands of discrete legal obligations, apply to public high schools in New York City. Common Good Colorado has chronicled the labyrinthine steps required to dismiss a tenured, but incompetent teacher and suspend a disruptive student in Colorado.

*Common Good Colorado is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization comprised of lawyers, educators, doctors and civic leaders who are dedicated to restoring common sense to Colorado law by enhancing the reliability of the way Colorado’s legal system affects society.*  
([www.cgood.org/colorado](http://www.cgood.org/colorado))

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