

Thank you for the opportunity to testify again. I must admit that I was unfamiliar with the so-called opt out provision as it relates to the Miscellaneous Education Bill. Most of the time when we speak of opt out, we mean “for testing.”

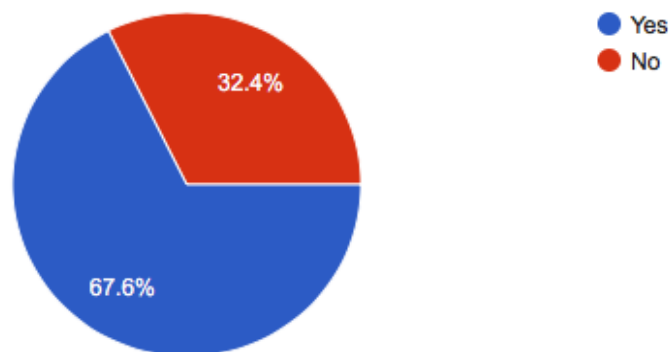
I am familiar, however, with The Family Education Rights and and Privacy Act known as FERPA and I know that parents have the right to opt their children out from being in the school’s identified Directory Information. Directory Information opt out prevents your child’s personal information from being shared with third party providers such as colleges, the military or any for-profit organizations.

Schools have to officially declare which information they considered to be directory information and then they have to notify parents of the right to opt out of sharing this information. I know that an opt-out provision currently exists for parents and guardians and for 18 year old students. I am wondering if this already exists, why you are considering a provision that would specifically opt out information from military recruiters and not for other third party providers? It seems that one could argue that Shell Oil or Monsanto, who might be seeking workers right after high school would cause people to also have philosophical considerations because of their affect on climate change, and yet we are not enacting an opt out for third party providers to check a box because their business hastens climate change.

Before seeking information from principals I saw the military recruiters as promoters of one option for students to consider, just as they might consider a gap year, a two or four year college, a prep school or a career opportunity. So, when I received your request on Wednesday late afternoon, I sought to get opinions from high school principals. To their credit, 38 principals answered my request for their opinions about this opt out provision. Here are their results and a few comments from high school principals:

Would you favor this opt out provision saying, that a student, parent or guardian may opt out of giving the student's name, address and telephone number to military recruiters?

(37 responses)



Here are the comments:

If I want my child's name given to a recruiter I will give it to them, or they will. Do schools give students names to other entities?

Not all students or families may want to get involved.

One of the things that I have come to understand Ken is that often there are no yes or no answers. My current practice, consistent I believe with FERPA is to send a letter to rising Junior parents asking them if they would like to have names withheld from the military or certain other institutions. If they so indicate in writing we honor that. Otherwise we treat recruiters like college reps. I don't understand the VT legislative proclivity for legislating in areas already covered by the Feds.

At the XXX Union High School, we already do this, so this law, passed or not pass, it would not change what we did (except for the reporting out to the Central Office part of the law found in the last paragraph.) By the way, the "opt out" form that we use also allows families to "Opt Out" of us providing directory information to college recruiters, if the family desires to "Opt Out."

I think the parent's decision over rules the student's opportunities. Recruiters should still come to school visits as college recruiters still do. A parent can opt out their child of any list that is distributed, SBAC testing, so I see this as no different.

The request for a different size font would make it appear as though we, as a school, support the "opt-out" option. It is our responsibility to notify, not support either way. It should be in the same "format" as all other notifications that are sent home to parents each year. -Ryan Parkman

This is currently our practice* and should continue. *We only allow students over 18 to opt out, minors parents can opt them out.

As you said in your email, Ken, I think our students should be introduced to a number of different career and post-secondary options. For several decades now, our country has relied on a very small proportion of our country to serve in the military, and I, personally, do not think this is sustainable. Just because military recruiters have access to a student's contact information, doesn't mean that that student will end up enlisting or commissioning in the military. However, I know that it is very difficult, even with access to this information, for military recruiters to begin speaking with qualified and interested men and women who might find much joy serving our country in this capacity.

We already have language for photos, 18 year olds, etc...this is just another way for parents to find fault at the school. We have enough paperwork and follow through to do. Keep adding legal work and putting more on the school, because parents can't say to a recruiter "NO, stop calling my son/daughter" should not shift the burden back to the school. We already feed, cloth, bath, educate, transport students...what next!!!!

No harm in giving kids chance to speak with recruiter and serve our country. It also may be a wonderful career for many Vermont kids Let families decide this eg how to handle a request from a recruiter rather than making it more difficult for them through an opt out. My understanding is this idea may also be in conflict with fed law

Those who don't want recruiters calling them should be able to opt out,

Students and families already have this option. I'm not sure that putting the opt out option on a school form will impact the number of students who choose to not be contacted by the military.

I believe in personalization. If a student, parent, or guardian doesn't wish to have contact information provided to the military, I believe that should be honored. We're not an arm of the military, and sharing that information is not essential the student's education or their learning expectations. It's an opportunity, and as such they should be able to opt out.

This would be taking another right away from 18 year olds. I believe it should be their decision.

We are in the business of education -- which does relate to ensuring our students know their rights and responsibilities as citizens. That said, I believe the responsibility to grant access to personal information is in the hands of the student and his or her family, not the school. In terms of the military, as we no longer practice the draft, the decision to enter military service is a CHOICE -- a further reason that students and their families should have the power to CHOOSE to opt out of providing personal information to military recruiters. Under no circumstances should schools provide phone numbers!

Why shouldn't they have the option to opt out? I would like to know the context around asking this question. Keri Gelenian kgelenian@rivendellschool.org

Privacy is the main issue I consider with this opt out provision. Students, parents, and guardians have the right to make decisions about a variety of issues as it pertains to students' college or career path.

It seems to me that parents opt out for many different reasons, some philosophical and some to not be bothered by telemarketers. Most of all, it seems to me that today we are far more sensitive about letting out personally identifiable information because of the many stories about data being mishandled or resulting in harm to kids.

This quote seems to sum it up for me:

“Companies who access students directory information can sell it to others or use it to market products directly to students; political offices can use it to build their voter tracking systems; thieves can use it to steal identities, and perpetrators can use it to stalk students will commit other crimes.”

So, my purpose today was to provide you with information. I must admit that I was a bit surprised that 2/3 of the principals would favor the opt-out provision in front of you. I know this will result in a cost for them and for their staff's time. And, I also know that it is next to impossible to calculate these costs. It is clear, however, that many school leaders are willing to absorb these costs to protect student freedoms and to keep kids safe.

Thanks for the opportunity to weigh in on this issue.