Glenn Beck takes to theaters to critique Common Core

The commentator offers ideas for fighting academic standards

BY LINDSEY LAVONT

Conservative media commentator Glenn Beck led a national strategy session to kill the Common Core State Standards on Thursday, using a two-hour presentation of scholarly research and recent foot soldiers to the cause.

"This one is being won," Beck said from a podium in Texas, with the image beamed onto conference members who paid $125 a ticket. "It's being won because there are your allies in the fight. You've lost alone, but we have lots of allies." The 27 people gathered at the Royal 23 Cinema in Rockville, Md., might be pleased by being alone.

The audience was packed throughout the rows of the crowded theater, and when Beck inspired his viewers to turn to their neighbors and introduce themselves, most people faced empty seats.

Ryan Miller, 25, traveled to Rockville from Hagerstown, Md., just outside the audience and in the theater where his girlfriend, Kim Shults, was also present.

Miller is running for the board of education in Montgomery County, Md., on an anti-Common Core platform. "I wanted to be able to talk more intelligently about the issues," he said, explaining why he came.

Elder has two children in elementary school in Montgomery County, Md., and has been a vocal critic of the standards. "I'm not convinced that Common Core is the right path," he said.

Elder is one of several experts who have been openly critical of the standards. "I'm not convinced that Common Core is the right path," he said.

The Common Core State Standards are designed to provide the skills and knowledge students should possess at the end of each school year, as well as to the high schools in the nation.

The standards are not curriculum; they are the guidelines about what is taught and how it is taught to students.

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POLITICS & THE NATION

Drawn-out execution renews abolition calls

Aziz governor orders review; unclear what changes could follow

BY MARK BERNER

For the third time this year, an execution in the United States went awry prompting outrage, questions, calls to get rid of the death penalty. But yet again, experts said it was unlikely that the episode would lead to widespread changes or prompt states to seriously alter their policies.

The execution of Joseph R. Wood III, who was killed by lethal injection Wednesday in Arizona, took nearly two hours. Witnesses reported that Wood was gasping and struggling to breathe, although state officials and other witnesses reported that he was only struggling for an amount of time. Next Wood to die, which lasted for so long that his attorneys were able to file a court request to stay while the execution was ongoing, prompted Gov. Jan Brewer (R) to demand a review.

"Any time there's a significant event like this, it forces some questions, it forces some issues," said Deborah W. Denno, a Fordham University professor and expert on the death penalty.

In particular, she said, Wood's prolonged death could increase the momentum of those who say the state's use of the sedative midazolam in executions is inhumane because it allows the executioner to witness the pain of the condemned prisoner.

"It's my belief that the state is not interested in, you know, in using a method that is effective, but it's not a good method," Denno said.

On Thursday, Dale Bredesen, a former governor of Utah and psychiatrist who has conducted several reviews, said Brewer should look for alternatives to the state's current method.

"They are very concerned about the pain that the condemned person is going through," Bredesen said. "They are very concerned about the process and the integrity of the process."