

EDITORIALS

## Can a child attend school where she lives weekdays?

Should the child of a live-in nanny be able to legally attend the “neighborhood” school of the home in which the nanny works?



**GLORIA ROMERO**  
STAFF COLUMNIST

Since last fall, this question has been debated in the affluent, mostly Caucasian Bay Area community of Orinda, even inspiring legislation to redefine school attendance zones for children of live-in housekeepers and nannies.

The unfolding debate, while illuminating education challenges of “the help” and the more affluent families who employ them, also illuminates the bigger policy debate over how students in California are assigned to schools based on geographic default assignment – ZIP code – in the first place.

School attendance zone boundaries based on geography have perpetuated what can only be recognized as “education redlining,” continuing to grow trends of an increasingly segregated public education system despite passage 70 years ago of *Brown v. Board of Education*. To some extent, the assignment by ZIP code



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has also contributed to fueling a modern-day parent empowerment/civil rights fight whereby parents, who are predominantly poor and minority, have increasingly demanded rights to either transform or escape their “assigned” chronically underperforming schools.

Senate Bill 200 was introduced to redefine compliance with California’s residency to include any pupil whose parent or legal guardian resides outside the child’s school district but is employed and lives within the district for a minimum of three days during the school week.

Impetus for the law change is Vivian, a 7-year-old Latina second-grader, whose mother works as a live-in nanny for Miriam Storch. Vivian has her own bedroom in the Storch home. Mother and child return on weekends to a less-affluent neighborhood about 20 minutes away.

SB200 was written following media reports that Orinda Union School District officials had hired a private investigator to determine Vivian’s “true” residency, then disenrolled her after concluding she did not legally reside in Orinda. District officials readmitted Vivian, but only after a media outcry in which Storch agreed to become Vivian’s legal guardian.

Vivian’s case renewed the discussion over geography and school enrollment policies in the United States. Nationally, several parents have been targeted by private investigators hired by local school districts to help them “weed out” non-resident students.

Recently, a Pennsylvania man, Hamlet Garcia, faced up to seven years imprisonment for “theft of educational services” after an investigator hired by a wealthy Montgomery County school district determined his 7-year-old daughter continued to attend school based on her grandfather’s residence, where she and her mother had resided during the parents’ marital separation. Charges were eventually dropped, but Garcia’s case not only trial highlighted joint custody arrangements and school attendance zones, but shone light on the seemingly extraordinary steps taken by some districts to maintain school attendance zones by ZIP codes inextricably correlated with class and race.

Amending state laws is long overdue to allow for contemporary realities of living arrangements imposed by employment and divorce. But these are short-term solutions. Ultimately, legislatures should embrace ending a feudalistic system of assigning kids merely by ZIP code. These laws restrain parental choice in education, too often trapping kids in state-identified chronically underperforming schools with no opportunity to exit failing schools.

Until this occurs, we should not be surprised to see parents demanding increased open-enrollment policies, special opportunity scholarships or “parent trigger” laws freeing parents to choose the best school match for them and their children.

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## Netanyahu can’t trust Iran

Israel’s leader will tell Congress of his nation’s wariness of any Obama administration deal with Tehran.

Today marks the third occasion that Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses a joint meeting of Congress. But unlike his uncontroversial appearances in 2011 and 1996, Mr. Netanyahu’s speech today has fomented much sound and fury in the nation’s Capital.

Israel’s leader accepted an invitation from House Speaker John Boehner to convey to lawmakers his nation’s grave concern that the Obama administration will strike a long-term nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which, Mr. Netanyahu fears, “could threaten the survival of Israel.”

That Mr. Netanyahu decided to make his case to Congress did not set well with the Obama White House.

Indeed, the president has refused to meet with his Israeli counterpart. Vice President Joe Biden (who also has the ceremonial role of president of the Senate) indicated he would not attend Mr. Netanyahu’s address.

Susan Rice, Mr. Obama’s national security adviser, said last week that the Israeli prime minister’s visit is “destructive” to relations between Washington and Jerusalem. And at least 30 Democratic lawmakers were expected to boycott Mr. Netanyahu’s speech, in deference to the president.

In the meantime, Secretary of State John Kerry argued Sunday that the Obama administration deserves “the benefit of the doubt” in its continuing negotiations with Tehran. He bases that on the “success” of the

short-term nuclear agreement the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China reached with Iran in 2013, which, according to Mr. Kerry, has made Israel safer.

But Mr. Netanyahu’s wariness about a nuclear agreement between the United States and Iran is not the result of his unwillingness to give the Obama administration the benefit of the doubt, but because he doesn’t believe Tehran has earned the benefit of the doubt.

Indeed, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Monday that Iran has yet to turn over information – due since August – concerning suspected explosives tests and other measures that might have been used to develop a nuclear weapon.

As such, said IAEA Director Yukiya Amano, his agency “is not in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities.”

The Obama administration wants Israel to accept – on faith – that Iran will be more compliant with the long-term nuclear agreement it is negotiating with the United States and the other five world powers than it has been with the short-term nuclear pact agreed to in 2013, and which it already has violated, according to the IAEA.

That is why Mr. Netanyahu rightly fears that the pending long-term agreement poses a threat to his nation’s survival.

## Don’t ignore lessons of appeasement

When Alfred E. Neuman said “What, me worry?” it was funny. But this message was not nearly as funny coming from President



**THOMAS SOWELL**  
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

Barack Obama and National Security Advisor Susan Rice.

In a musical comedy, it would be hilarious. Unfortunately – indeed, tragically – the world today is about as far from a musical comedy as you

can get, with terrorists rampaging across the Middle East, leaving a trail of unspeakable atrocities in their wake, and with Iran moving closer to producing a nuclear bomb, with an intercontinental missile on the horizon.

We will be lucky to get through the remainder of President Obama’s term in office without a major catastrophe, from which we may or may not recover.

Iran has announced repeatedly that it plans to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. But you don’t need an intercontinental missile to reach Israel from Iran. Tehran is less than 1,000 miles from Jerusalem.

It was painfully ironic to hear Ms. Rice tell us that the danger we face today is not as serious as the dangers we faced in World War II.

Anyone who has actually studied the period that led up to World War II knows that the Western democracies followed feckless policies remarkably similar to those that we are following today. And anyone who studies that war itself knows that the West came dangerously close to losing it before finally getting their act together.

In a nuclear age, we may not have time to let reality finally sink in on our leaders and wake up the public to the dangers.

The dangers of Hitler’s sudden rise to power in Germany during the early 1930s were played down, and even ridiculed, by politicians, journalists and the intelligentsia in both Britain and France. Prominent British intellectual Harold Laski opined that Hitler was “a cheap conspirator rather than an inspired revolutionary, the creature of circumstances rather than the maker of destiny.”

In other words, the Nazis were the “junior varsity” of their day in the eyes of the know-it-alls.

Even after Hitler consolidated his political power in Germany, imposed a dictatorship and began building up a massive war machine, the Western democracies continued to believe that they could reach a peaceful understanding with him. There was euphoria in the West when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich, waving an agreement signed by Hitler and declaring that it meant “peace for our time.” Our time turned out to be less than one year before the biggest and most ghastly war in history broke out.

For the first three years of that war, the West lost battle after battle. France collapsed and surrendered after just six weeks of fighting, and few expected the British to survive the blitzkrieg Hitler unleashed on them from the air. Americans were defeated in the Philippines.

A nuclear war is not likely to last three years; there is unlikely to be time enough to recover from years of glib, foolish words and catastrophic decisions.

Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution.

## Rising heat over firefighters deal

Union needs to bargain with bankrupt San Bernardino.

The city of San Bernardino has been at odds with its firefighters union from the start of bankruptcy proceedings in 2012.

The city has already received court approval to nullify its past memorandum of understanding with the union and proceed with new terms and conditions. While the precise details of those conditions are confidential, one can surmise that changes would involve cuts to compensation packages.

The firefighters union has been “stonewalling” progress on this front, according to the judge overseeing the city’s bankruptcy proceedings. Repeated requests for comment from the union have gone unanswered.

While the union is refusing to negotiate a new contract, the city is considering contracting out fire services. The only problem: The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection doesn’t want to bid, saying the city’s finances are too risky.

“One of the obligations the city has in the bankruptcy proceedings is to establish greater efficiencies in how it does business,” says City Attorney Gary Saenz. “When we look at our Fire Department, we see that it is exorbitant for the city.”

Thus, the city is looking for ways to provide the same, or better, level of service at a lower cost. Since Cal Fire provides cheaper services to surrounding cities relative to San Bernardino’s Fire Department, the city has repeatedly expressed interest in contracting with Cal Fire.

Due to Cal Fire’s unwillingness to bid, however, the city is considering a costly lawsuit to force a bid. A bankrupt government entity suing another government entity to force a bid seems excessive.

Unfortunately, it seems that option might come to pass unless the firefighters union decides to sit at the bargaining table and come to terms that benefit city residents.

### MICHAEL RAMIREZ / CREATORS.COM



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Obama betrays American ideals

The recent injunction of President Obama’s immigration reform via executive action by a federal district court in Texas is a victory for America. By using executive action, Obama has overstepped his constitutional bounds and is essentially making his own laws. Congress is there for a reason, and his refusal to go to the Capitol, where the American public is represented, emphasizes the partisan game modern-day politics has become.

Rather than attempt a compromise, he has taken the “my way or no way” approach. America was founded upon the idea of compromise, and the betrayal of this

ideal is detrimental to the public as a whole.

Alex Vaka  
Chino Hills

#### FUND ACADEMICS FIRST

Fired Athletic Director Brian Wickstrom lost his \$233,000 salary, and it could cost \$80,000 to find a new one [“Paying price for turnover,” Front page, Feb. 23]. It costs me over \$39,000 a year to pay for my granddaughter’s fees, tuition and room and board for UC Riverside. Why do they need an athletic director at all? Don’t the students at UCR have classes, homework and papers to write? Do they really have time to use some fancy sports complex? Wickstrom’s salary alone would fund six full time students.

As for the big-time donors:

Big deal – you contribute only 4 percent of the total athletic budget, and you get a tax deduction. So the federal government (and the rest of us) gets to pay as well.

It’s time to abolish the whole “athletics” nonsense. If the students need exercise, they can run around the block or join a private gym. Put classrooms or parking on the athletic fields. I spent seven years at UC Berkeley and never saw the inside of the gym except during registration. Clark Kerr was chancellor at the time and spoke wisely about his job: “providing parking for the faculty, sex for the students and athletics for the alumni.” But fees at Berkeley were only \$150 a year at the time.

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