

Dayton Daily News

GovWatch: More charter school allegations; ex-Va. governor on trial

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By **Josh Sweigart**, Staff Writer

State Rep. Fred Strahorn, D-Dayton, is asking for a federal civil rights probe to be added to the list of state, federal and local agencies investigating a string of charter schools in Dayton. Strahorn sent a letter this month to the U.S. Office of Civil Rights asking for an investigation into the 19 Concept Schools in Ohio.

This followed allegations from former teachers and others that administrators at Horizon Science Academy schools in Dayton paid Turkish teachers more than non-Turkish teachers, publicly belittled female teachers and paid them less than male teachers and imposed stricter disciplinary action on black students.

Horizon schools are managed by the nonprofit Concept Schools, which runs dozens of schools here and in other states and is affiliated with the influential U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, who is from Turkey.

Strahorn said his research of Gulen-affiliated schools suggests “these civil rights violations are not confined to Ohio schools but are a systemic problem across the nation.”

More cheating allegations

Problems have continued mounting for the Concept Schools since **the I-Team reported last month that the FBI, Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Auditor of State and others are all investigating the school chain.** The FBI investigation is related to a federal technology grant. Others have to do with allegations of test and attendance tampering.

The progressive think-tank Innovation Ohio, meanwhile, released a study last month claiming students at the Horizon Science Academy in Columbus scored extremely high on a state proficiency test but extremely low on the ACT the same year.

“Today’s report raises the possibility that the cheating and data manipulation alleged in Dayton may have occurred at Horizon’s Columbus campus, too,” said Innovation Ohio spokesman Dale Butland.

I-Team reporters attempted to attend the public board meeting at the Horizon Science Academy High School in Dayton on Saturday — which was in fact a board meeting for four Concept schools — but were greeted with a sign on the door.

“The first board meeting of the new school year scheduled for August 9, 2014 has been cancelled as there are not enough members available to make a quorum,” the sign said, noting it has not been rescheduled at this time.

Former Va. governor on trial

The corruption trial of former Republican Governor Robert F. McDonnell has played out in recent weeks like the script of a soap opera.

McDonnell and his wife, Maureen, stand accused of accepting \$165,000 in gifts and loans from a wealthy businessman, Jonnie Williams. In exchange for the gifts, which allegedly included loans for their daughter’s wedding, a Rolex watch and top-notch clothing, prosecutors accused the McDonnells of giving Williams unprecedented access to the governor’s office and promising to promote the dietary supplement, Anatabloc, which was manufactured by Williams’ company. The trial, in its third week, has been laced with emotional and, at times, strange testimony about McDonnell, his wife and their relationship, according to reports from the Washington Post.

Phil Cox, former political adviser to the governor, testified that he was “horrified” and thought Maureen McDonnell was a “train wreck” when she allegedly peddled Antatabloc to Ann Romney, the wife of former presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

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