

Prior to passage of the IDEA, children with disabilities were routinely placed in academically inferior programs or denied an education altogether. In addition, "special education" programs often functioned as a way for newly desegregated schools to establish internal segregation on the basis of race, categorizing minority students as mentally deficient. Several lawsuits in the 1970s drew attention to the improper assessment of children for placement in special education programs.

Implementation of the IDEA has proved controversial. Many disability rights advocates emphasize the requirement of "least restrictive setting," while some opponents argue that "appropriate education" means that spending should be commensurate with a child's potential productivity. The least restrictive setting stipulation, coupled with the act's mandate to give each child an appropriate education, gives parents the right to demand mainstreaming of their children in regular classes. The degree of inclusion would be based on a student's "individual education plan." Resistant school districts argue that costs are prohibitive and that the needs of disabled students are best met in settings other than the mainstream classes. Parents are generally divided on the issue. Some complain that the presence of disabled children in classrooms is disruptive; others are concerned that school districts look for excuses to retain educational segregation.

Because Congress provided no enforcement mechanism other than individual lawsuits, parents have had to turn to the courts to seek redress under the IDEA. Disability rights proponents decry the reliance on individual lawsuits. Many of the cases are narrow in scope, affecting only the child for whom the case is brought. Moreover, only parents with the resources, education, and determination to pursue litigation are able to challenge local administrators. As no class-action suits have been brought, courts have not ordered any changes to the education system. Furthermore, enormous variations in the rulings of the several federal courts have left parents and school districts without clear guidelines.

Critics also charge that the IDEA unfairly diverts educational resources from average students to "special needs" children. As more children have been diagnosed with learning and developmental disabilities, charges have been levied that parents have sought out unfounded diagnoses in order to demand special services from the public schools. Opponents of the IDEA also point out that the act is an unfunded federal mandate. Controversy surrounding the IDEA stems in part from the failure of Congress to fully underwrite the costs of implementation.

Laura Hague

See also: Brown v. Board of Education (1954); Civil Rights Movement.

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Intelligent Design

See Creationism and Intelligent Design

Internet

The Internet is a global system of distributed computer networks that use "packet switch" technologies for information and service exchange. It provides numerous communication services such as e-mail, text and voice chat, bulletin boards, file sharing and transmission, streaming audio and video, and hyperlinked World Wide Web documents. The size, speed, and scalability of the Internet have made it the most important communication technology of the past several decades. It has also become a major arena of the culture wars.

The Internet's infrastructure was developed by a loose-knit group of American academic and private-sector computer scientists interested in network technology, and it was primarily funded by the U.S. military. The idea for the system appeared in a series of memos written by J.C.R. Licklider in 1962, which envisioned "Galactic Network" of interconnected computers that would advance human reasoning through "man-computer symbiosis." After Licklider became the head of the Defense Department's computer research program, he was instrumental in securing funds for a team of computer scientists to construct his vision. The first node was installed at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1969, split into military and academic sides in 1981, and opened to commercial use in 1991.

The Mosaic commercial Web browser gave the general public a user-friendly interface that contributed to the Internet's ubiquity. By the mid-1990s, "Internet" and "Web" were part of the popular cultural lexicon. In the partisan battles of the 2000 presidential election campaign, right-wing pundits assailed the Democrat candidate, Vice President Al Gore, for allegedly claiming to have "invented the Internet." Gore, whose more ambiguous comment was that he had "taken the initiative in creating the Internet," was in fact an early supporter of the technology. As a U.S. senator (D-TN) in the 1980s and early 1990s, Gore had sponsored legislation that supported linking universities and libraries through the system, as well as using the Internet for commerce.

The Internet has also been drawn into the culture wars over the issue of users' privacy. Legislation has attempted to limit the monitoring of online activity by law enforcement and employers, specify how sensitive personal and financial information can be collected, curtail "spam" or junk mail, and prosecute identity theft. Privacy advocates have become especially worried in the post-9/11 era, particularly after the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act expanded the U.S. government's ability to conduct Internet surveillance and data mining.

The Internet has become a focal point of controversies concerning both access and content. As communication technologies have become a central feature of the "information economy," a "digital divide" separates those who have the access and skills to use the Internet effectively and those who do not, which has exacerbated social inequalities. Other controversies involve attempts to restrict content, particularly material considered obscene or dangerous to national security, such as bomb recipes and terrorist recruitment. Attempts to regulate obscenity have proved contentious and constitutionally problematic. The 1996 Communications Decency Act and the 1998 Child Online Protection Act were mostly dismantled by the U.S. Supreme Court because of First Amendment concerns. Only the 2000 Children's Internet Protection Act survived constitutional challenge; its relatively modest provisions regulate obscenity at federally funded schools and libraries.

Internet pornography illustrates why content regulation can be difficult. U.S. law since the Supreme Court ruling in *Miller v. California* (1973) relies on local or community standards for determining obscenity. Free-speech proponents suggest that it is absurd for the cultural standards of a small, conservative community to determine what is obscene in cities like Las Vegas. Nonetheless, several Internet pornography providers have been convicted for interstate trafficking of obscenity based on the community standards rule. This also raises the difficulty of regulating content distributed across a global network. For example, the age of consent for nude modeling is higher in the United States than in many European countries. The British model Linsey Dawn McKenzie caused a stir when nude photos of her as a minor intermixed with American photos taken of her after she turned eighteen.

The Internet has become a nexus for political as well as cultural controversies. In 1998, Matt Drudge, editor of an online muckraking site, reported that *Newsweek* magazine pulled a story about a twenty-one-year-old White House intern's affair with President Bill Clinton. The political storm that followed the story resulted in the impeachment of Clinton for perjury. In the 2004 presidential primaries, Howard Dean became an early front runner for the Democratic nomination largely by using the Internet for grassroots fundraising, but it later contributed to his downfall when unflattering video clips of him screaming at a campaign rally spread across cyberspace.

Political campaign managers hire companies to collect information on voters' political preferences in order to "narrowcast" a candidate's message on the Web. Grassroots groups use online resources for mobilizing members. Blogs, short for "Web logs," are online diaries that let citizens express their opinions on the issues of the day.

Steve G. Hoffman

See also: Censorship; Clinton Impeachment; Culture Jamming; Dean, Howard; *Drudge Report*; Gore, Al; Pornography; Privacy Rights; September 11.

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Iran-Contra Affair

Secret U.S. arms shipments to Iran and Central America during the Ronald Reagan administration in the 1980s led to the political controversy known as the Iran-Contra Affair and acrimonious debate over whether the president willfully ignored federal law.

The roots of the scandal lay in a series of U.S. foreign policy setbacks, including the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and the Iranian sponsorship of terrorist groups in Lebanon that kidnapped U.S. citizens and held them hostage. Also in 1979, the leftist Sandinistas came to power in Nicaragua.

Early in Reagan's presidency, his administration began funding and equipping Nicaraguan antileftist guerrillas known as the Contras. The administration also provided strong support to a right-wing regime in nearby El Salvador against communist insurgents. In 1983, however, human rights abuses committed by U.S. allies in Central America prompted Congress to pass the Boland Amendment, which prohibited federal agencies from funding the Nicaraguan insurgency.

Despite the ban, the National Security Council (NSC), first under Robert McFarlane (1983–1985) and then under John Poindexter (1985–1986), devised a complex plan to sell weapons to Iran, to generate the goodwill required for Iran to act on behalf of American hostages held in Lebanon, and in turn divert the profits from the arms sales secretly to the Contras in Nicaragua. The charade was overseen by Oliver North, a U.S. Ma-

rines lieutenant colonel working from an office in the White House.

The scandal broke when a Lebanese newspaper exposed the secret arms shipments, leading Reagan on November 13, 1986, to appear on national television to confirm the story while denying that he was trading arms for hostages. This was followed twelve days later by a White House statement revealing that proceeds from the sales (between \$10 million and \$30 million) went to the Contras. On March 4, 1987, Reagan announced, "A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and best intentions tell me that is true, but the facts and evidence tell me it is not."

Apologists for Reagan blamed subordinates and pointed out that the Boland Amendment did not expressly list the NSC. They also emphasized the worthy causes being served: freeing Americans and fighting communism. Critics viewed the incident as worthy of impeachment because of the willful violation of the law. A presidential commission, various congressional committees, and an independent counsel conducted investigations.

In the end, McFarlane, Poindexter, North, and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger were found complicit in the scheme. Reagan and Vice President George H.W. Bush were never directly tied to the scandal, though they were blamed for improper oversight. Bush was elected president in 1988 and eventually pardoned Weinberger and five others convicted in the scandal. In 1994, when North ran unsuccessfully for the Senate in Virginia, he caused an uproar when he said Reagan "knew everything" from the beginning about the diversion of funds to the Contras.

Philippe R. Girard

See also: Bush Family; Cold War; Communists and Communism; Conspiracy Theories; Freedom of Information Act; Human Rights; North, Oliver; Presidential Pardons; Reagan, Ronald; Soviet Union and Russia; War Powers Act.

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Irvine, Reed

The founder of the watchdog group Accuracy in Media (AIM) in 1969, former economist Reed Irvine devoted himself to exposing what he claimed was a liberal bias

in the news media, targeting the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the major television networks, National Public Radio (NPR), the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), and the syndicated columnist Jack Anderson, among others. "Journalists," he charged, "are blurring the line between reporting and advocacy."

Reed John Irvine was born into a Mormon family on September 29, 1922, in Salt Lake City, Utah. After graduating from the University of Utah (BS, 1942), serving in the U.S. Marines during World War II, and completing his education at Oxford University (MA, economics, 1951), Irvine worked as an economist for the Federal Reserve Board (1951–1977). He died on November 16, 2004, in Rockville, Maryland.

Irvine founded AIM in reaction to the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago (which he felt was covered by journalists who were overtly sympathetic with the war protesters) and the Tet Offensive (which he thought the American media had exaggerated, giving a psychological boost to the Vietcong). A regular attendee of the "McDowell luncheon"—named for Arthur McDowell, the founder of the Council Against Communist Aggression—Irvine was inspired to form AIM after one such meeting in which the group discussed the "problem" of the news media. That discussion was part of a national debate initiated by Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, who had publicly scorned the press corps as "nattering nabobs of negativism."

In monitoring the press corps and television and radio networks for accuracy and fairness in news programming, Irvine produced a bimonthly newsletter (*The AIM Report*), a daily radio program (*Media Monitor*), and a weekly column (syndicated in 100 newspapers). He also wrote letters to the editor and published advertisements in offending newspapers in order to "correct" their news reports. He sought to influence editorial policies by buying shares in media corporations and raising issues during stockholder meetings. Top media executives occasionally met with him to hear his concerns. AIM was at the height of its power and influence during the Reagan era in the 1980s, with reportedly 40,000 paid members and an operating budget of \$1.5 million.

Irvine and his supporters felt that the mainstream news media were more critical of capitalism than communism and tended to be hostile toward the American military and its national security organizations. With that in mind, Irvine wrote the preface to James L. Tyson's *Target America: The Influence of Communist Propaganda on U.S. Media* (1981), a polemical book heavily promoted by AIM. Irvine frequently accused the news media of focusing more attention on human rights abuses in right-wing dictatorships such as Chile than on abuses by communist governments. He was especially critical of reports on the lasting effects of Agent Orange, the chemical herbicide used by the U.S. military during the