

**PARTICIPANTS IN 9/16/2013 NEWS CONFERENCE ON
ACLU'S LATEST SUIT AGAINST THE R.I. BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Marc Gursky, ACLU of RI volunteer attorney.

Ken Fish, former RI Department of Education director of the Office of Middle and High School Reform:

“ ‘Trust Chafee’ was the campaign slogan that promised transparency and fairness in state government -- values synonymous with his family name. Today I am calling on Governor Chafee to make good on that slogan and live up to those promises -- and those family values. In this world of accountability, Governor Chafee must be held accountable for the arrogance of *his* appointed Board Chair in leading *his* appointed Board into repeated violations of open meetings laws and attempting to stifle an open and informed discussion among its own members.”

Steven Brown, ACLU of Rhode Island executive director:

“Parents, students, teachers, community advocates, the General Assembly, and just about everybody else with an interest in the education of our children have been engaged in a vigorous public discussion and debate on the issue of high stakes testing for the past six months. The only group we know of that has not publicly debated the issue - and refused to do so repeatedly despite numerous public requests - is the state’s own Board of Education. Even worse, they have been willing to repeatedly violate the law in order to avoid that discussion. The Board’s actions these past few months are a stark refutation of the openness in government that Governor Chafee has so often promoted. That is why this latest legal action - the ACLU’s third challenge in two months to the Board’s failure to abide by open government laws – is so important.”

Rick A. Richards, plaintiff and former employee in the Department of Education’s Office of Testing:

“Under the new Board of Education’s Chair, the tone and process of policy making is in high contrast with previous Boards. No previous Chair ever called opposition protesters ‘a sideshow’ or students ‘a bunch of kid with signs.’ Governor Chafee set a high bar for public transparency, yet he watches silently as his Chair repeatedly ducks under this bar. As the public grows more uneasy about the Board’s current accountability policies - especially the keystone high stakes testing policy - there should be an effort on the Board’s part to demonstrate, with evidence, that these are the best possible policies for Rhode Island. And there should be an effort on the Governor’s part to ensure this happens.”

Thomas Sgouros, plaintiff and the parent of a high school student:

“The Board of Education has made it clear that they value a quickly dispatched agenda more highly than a public discussion of the most important issues they face. The old education board approved this policy, but since that time the effects of the policy have changed the debate. These include not only the number of students at risk of not graduating, but also the many educational opportunities denied our students due to the increased focus on testing. Circumstances have changed, the new board should know about it, but they don’t care to listen. Are efficient meetings more important than the future of thousands of students?”