

School Services State Aid Faces Test

The new Mandated Services Aid Program for non-public schools approved last Spring by the State Legislature is being contested on state and federal constitutional grounds.

Under terms of the law, non-public elementary and secondary schools throughout the state will receive next Spring approximately \$28 million for "mandated services" rendered services the state requires

the non-public school to perform, such as examinations, attendance and the like.

Catholic schools of the state would receive approximately \$24 million of the \$28 million—about 7 per cent of their total operating budgets. This has been described by Catholic school officials in Albany as "a modest step" in the need for alleviation of the school's financial troubles.

(Schools in the Diocese of Rochester, according to Father Daniel Brent, diocesan superintendent of schools, will receive nearly \$1.4 million under the new law.)

Foes of the law, including individuals, civil liberties groups and some religious groups, claim it violates the state's Blaine Amendment and the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The law pays a non-public school 15 cents per day for each student in grades 1

through 6, and 25 cents per day for each student in grades 1 through 12.

It's based on average daily attendance (as are all state aid bills for the public schools), and is said by its sponsors to be a realistic reimbursement for the cost of keeping records, holding examinations and other services which are required for every school.

Payment will be made in two parts, half on or before March 15, 1971, and the second half on or before May 15.

Last April the State Assembly passed the bill, 125-21, and the Senate concurred, 46-9.

The Blaine Amendment section of the State Constitution prohibits state support of church-affiliated schools. But it contains exceptions for transportation and "examination or inspection."

There were about 850,000 pupils in all non-public elementary and secondary schools of the state last semester. Of that number, about 700,000 attended Catholic schools.



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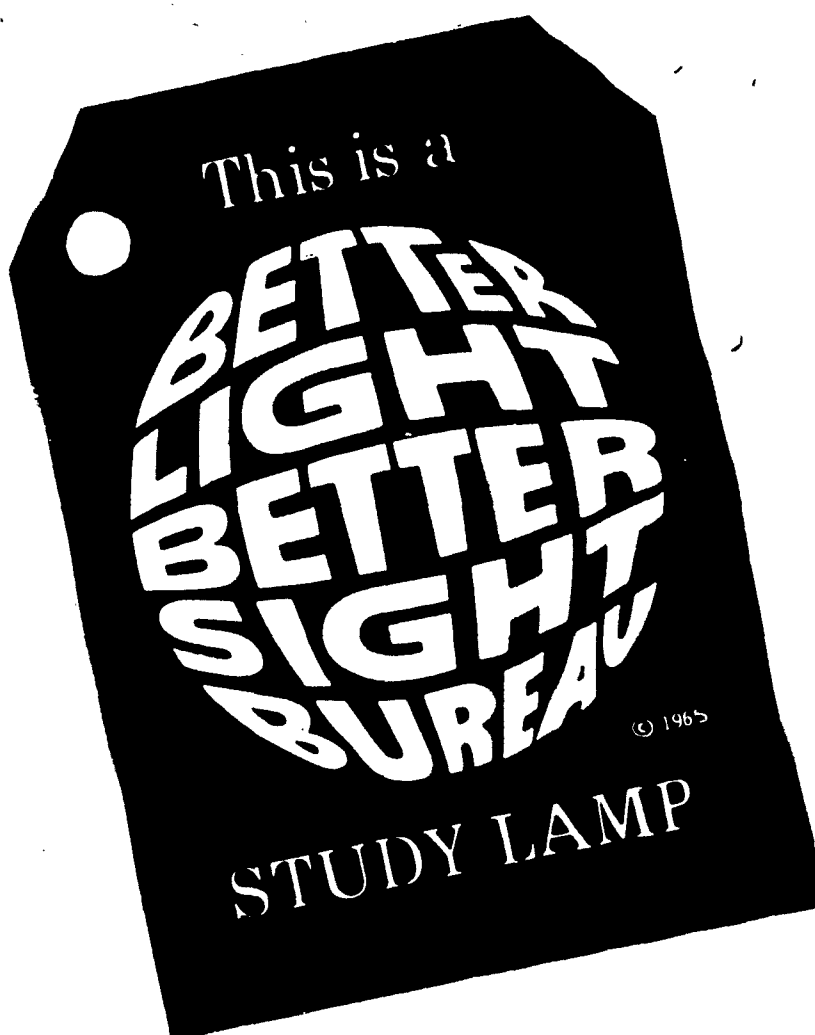
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