

Abstinence should be taught

By TOM J. TRACY Kensel | Posted: Tuesday, February 22, 2011 2:00 am |

It was extremely disappointing to read the testimony by some of those in attendance at the hearing on House Bill 1299, requiring public schools in North Dakota teach abstinence as a part of their health curriculum.

What is abstinence? It is this revolutionary new idea that teenagers would be better off delaying having sex until marriage to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, emotional problems, possible pregnancy and abortion.

This is something I believe many, many people in North Dakota would feel is in the teenager's best interest.

But if you listened to or read the testimony of the North Dakota School Boards Association representative or the representative of Department of Public Instruction, not to mention some of the comments made by the chairwoman of the House Education Committee, Rep. RaeAnn Kelsch, you might think exposure to abstinence would be a detriment to North Dakota youth.

Rep. Kelsch thought some legislators would be offended by the bill because of a statement made by one of its proponents pertaining to giving birth to a child out of wedlock.

Wedlock refers to marriage. Would society be better off if fewer babies were born out of wedlock and more were born "locked in" to a family with a mom and dad? All the statistics show that the latter is true.

But by far the most discouraging comments came from the organizations who you would think would have the student's best interest in mind: DPI and the state School Boards Association represented by Bev Nielson.

Nielson testified, "Current laws and policies allow local districts to determine how these topics are taught based on local needs and community mores."

It is very hard to believe that most North Dakota school boards would reject the teaching of abstinence once all the facts are on the table. I would like to think that Nielson was projecting her opinion rather than the collective view of the NDSBA membership.

A bill that could help prevent physical and emotional harm to North Dakota youth should certainly be a part of every school's health curriculum.