

IN BRIEF EDUCATION

HoNDA civics

What is a school? That's a question legislators have had to ask as home education grows at a rate of up to 15 percent a year. Educating at home is now legal throughout the United States, but not every state grants it the status of "private schooling." That leaves many homeschool families ineligible for federal programs that apply only to public and private schools.

Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R-Colo.) proposes to remedy the situation by amending several federal laws with her Home School Non-Discrimination Act (HoNDA), introduced on July 15. The legislation would allow homeschool families in all states to establish Coverdell Education Savings Accounts and to contribute up to \$2,000 annually to these tax-free accounts, which can be used for educational purposes from kindergarten through college. Currently, only families in the 13 states that treat homeschools as private schools may open Coverdell accounts. HoNDA would also clarify that homeschool students entering college are eligible for federal financial



Musgrave

aid and would amend child labor laws to allow homeschool students to work during school hours because of their flexible schedules.

But the bill's greatest significance, according to Home School Legal Defense Association lobbyist Caleb Kershner, is that it "recognizes homeschooling in the eyes of Congress." The bill affirms the civic contributions of parents who homeschool and is the first federal legislation with the expressed purpose of acknowledging the freedom to educate at home. —Jennifer Marshall