



SCHOOLS Florida

After the Florida legislature changed state law to allow any resident to challenge their school district's textbooks and curricula and get a hearing before an outside mediator, The Associated Press attempted to gauge the effect. The AP filed public records requests with Florida's 67 countywide school districts, seeking all challenges since January 1, 2017. Seven districts reported at least one challenge.

Under the new version of the Florida law, the mediator advises the local school board, and the board's decision is final. Previously, challenges could only be made by parents to the school or district. There was also no mediator and fewer mandates. Districts must now also post online a list of all new books and material by grade level, to make monitoring easier.

The Florida Citizens' Alliance, a conservative group, pushed for the change, arguing that many districts ignored challenges or heard them with stacked committees, and didn't consider residents who don't have children in the schools. Its members say boards rejected complaints over sexually explicit novels like Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* being issued to middle school students. They also don't believe evolution and global warming should be taught without students hearing counterarguments.

Keith Flaugh, a managing director of the alliance, said schools are using pornographic materials and textbooks that "totally distort our founding values and principles. They are teaching our kids socialism versus free markets. They are teaching our kids that the government is our nanny, the government is supposed to protect them." He also said children receive a biased

presentation against freedom of religion and gun rights.

Brandon Haught, spokesman for Florida Citizens for Science, which opposed the bill, said his group is prepared to fight any challenges made against the teaching of evolution and climate change, which nearly all biologists and climatologists agree are proven facts. Haught, a high school environmental science teacher, said he is surprised social studies and English teachers have not formed similar coalitions to defend their courses.

"The alliance is pushing their narrow ideology on the public schools in any way they can, and so far they're meeting with success. I can't speak for the other academic subjects they're targeting, but I know beyond a doubt that their ideology when it comes to science is grossly ignorant and doesn't belong anywhere near a classroom," Haught said.

Broward County Superintendent Robert Runcie, who is president of the state superintendents association, said the changes, which took effect July 1, are "cumbersome." Districts have always encouraged parents and residents to voice concerns about materials and curricula, he said, and the mediator is an unnecessary step. The new law "creates a level of bureaucratic hurdle that could be disruptive to some good processes that are already in place," he said.

In challenges reported to the AP, some challengers think public schools use biased history textbooks, while others believe they push literature that's too sexually explicit. Some assert the danger posed by Muslim terrorists is underexposed.

The AP listed a number of "notable complaints," including the following:

In Brevard County, home of the Kennedy Space Center, a Citizens'

Alliance couple filed challenges against elementary school social studies textbooks, alleging each has dozens of inaccuracies. They say authors frequently ignore American exceptionalism and the books' assertion that global warming is caused by human activity is "blatant indoctrination." The district says no changes were made.

In Santa Rosa County, in the western Panhandle, a parent wants to ban Ray Bradbury's 1953 novel *Fahrenheit 451*, which Bradbury wrote as a cautionary tale on the banning of books, because the parent found profanity and violence in the book. [For more details on this challenge, see page 75.]

In Nassau County, north of Jacksonville, a resident challenged the teaching of evolution, arguing that life was created and perhaps planted by space aliens. A hearing was held and the mediator is preparing a report.

In Seminole County, north of Orlando, two parents complained that a middle school ancient history textbook had no chapter on Islamic civilization while mentioning Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The district replied that Islam was emerging during the timeframe taught and is covered in 10th grade.

In Duval County, which covers Jacksonville, the parent of a sixth-grade girl complained that an assigned novel, *Bad Boy* by Walter Dean Myers, is too explicit for that age group because it uses "penis" and a homophobic slur. The parent also criticized its description of heroin use, gang violence and the protagonist's questioning of religion. The district agreed to warn parents before it is assigned. Reported in: Associated Press, November 26.



COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Berkeley, California; New Haven, Connecticut; Chicago, Illinois, Columbia, Missouri; Middlebury, Vermont

Free speech on campus, and attempts to block unpopular speakers, was a recent Cover Story on CBS-TV's "Sunday Morning" news magazine. CBS said, "A war of words is raging on many a college campus . . . a debate in which the right of free speech itself is under fire." CBS reporter Rita Braver offered a number of examples.

At Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, a faculty member was yelled at by students, because his wife (also a Yale instructor) had suggested students should be free to wear any Halloween costume they choose, even if slightly offensive. A month later, the teacher resigned.

At the University of Missouri in Columbia, students and faculty members tried to stop a student reporter from covering their protest. "This is a First Amendment that protects your right to stand here, and protects mine!" the photographer said. At the University of California at Berkeley, when conservative commentator Ben Shapiro showed up to speak, there were multiple arrests. The school was on virtual lockdown, and more than half a million dollars was spent on security. Also at Berkeley, students wanted comedian Bill Maher to cancel his commencement address, in part because he had made jokes about Islam.

"Whoever told you, you only had to hear what didn't upset you?" Maher quipped. But at campuses around the country, Braver said, some speakers were dis-invited, or simply backed out in the face of student opposition, such as former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,

head of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde, and the rapper and actor Common.

President Barack Obama has commented on the trend. In September 2015, speaking to young people in Des Moines, Iowa, he said, "I've heard some college campuses where they don't want to have a guest speaker who, you know, is too conservative. Or they don't want to read a book if it has language that is offensive to African Americans. Or somehow sends a demeaning signal towards women . . . I don't agree with that, that you as students at colleges have to be coddled and protected from different points of view." Some of the protests are in reaction to deliberately provocative figures, like white nationalist Richard Spencer. But what happens when the speaker says he is just reporting on his academic research?

"I think what I'm saying is important for college kids to hear," said Charles Murray, a libertarian political scientist with the American Enterprise Institute. His 2012 book *Coming Apart* explores the growing divide between rich and poor white Americans. "Most of my lectures are going after them as members of a new elite that [is] out of touch with mainstream America," Murray said. But when he came to talk about it at Middlebury College in Vermont last March, there were protests, as chanting and yelling students shouted him down. Phil Hoxie, a member of the student wing of the American Enterprise Institute, helped bring Murray to campus. He told Braver he knew that Murray would be controversial: "It wasn't a surprise to us that some people might not like *The Bell Curve*. But we were not at all hoping that he would discuss *The Bell Curve*. We were hoping that he would give a lecture on *Coming Apart*."

The Bell Curve is a previous book of Murray's which suggested race may play a part in determining intelligence, and asserted that blacks do less well than whites on IQ tests. That set off a firestorm when it was published in 1994—a firestorm reignited at Middlebury.

Murray was set to be interviewed by political science professor Allison Stanger. But seconds after they took the stage, students drowned them out with a tirade of shouts. "We really lost an education opportunity," Stanger told Braver.

"We didn't actually prevent him from speaking," said student Liz Dunn. "He still wrote plenty of articles before and after the talk. It was just saying in this specific time on this specific stage, we're sending you a message that we do not support your ideals."

Students like Dunn insist that just letting someone like Murray be heard increases the likelihood of violence against minorities. In fact, Murray's appearance did result in violence, of a different kind. When professor Stanger was escorting Murray out, they were attacked by a mob that included outside activists, and she was left with a concussion and whiplash. Ironically, Stanger was selected to moderate the event because she was seen as a respected professor with liberal credentials.

"I actually went back and reviewed *The Bell Curve* and prepared really tough questions that I never really got to ask in front of an audience that was listening," she told Braver. "It was this real group-think mob mentality where people weren't reading and thinking for themselves, but rather relying on other people to tell them what to think."

And it isn't just Middlebury; Murray was shouted down at the University of Michigan this past fall as well.



Braver asked, “What do you think is different [on college campuses]? Have students changed?”

“Well, the identity politics is way more intense,” Murray replied. “You are getting this, ‘You can’t talk to me about any of my life experiences because you aren’t a woman, and you aren’t black, or you aren’t poor,’ and therefore it’s almost as if they’re saying we have no common humanity.”

In fact, some critics say too many college campuses today aren’t places for a civil exchange of ideas, but an intolerant world of political correctness. A recent Gallup poll finds that 54 percent of college students say people on campus are afraid to say what they believe.

And if you visit a campus these days, Braver said, you may feel like you need a dictionary for a whole new set of phrases . . . terms like “safe space” (a place where students can go where they won’t be exposed to topics that make them uncomfortable), or “trigger warnings” (when a professor cautions students that upcoming material could be distressing).

But now, there are some signs of a backlash. Robert Zimmer, president of the University of Chicago, told Braver, “Discomfort is an intrinsic part of an education.”

Last school year, the university sent a letter to incoming freshman that said, in part:

“We do not support so-called ‘trigger warnings,’ we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual ‘safe spaces’ where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own.”

Braver asked, “Why did the university have to put out a letter like that in the first place?”

“Part of the way we operate is that we’re a place where there’s constant

open discourse, constant expression and constant argument,” Zimmer replied. Reported in: www.cbsnews.com, January 21.

NET NEUTRALITY

Now that the Federal Communications Commission has rolled back “net neutrality” rules, what’s next? With new appointees by President Trump, the FCC voted on December 14 to end rules that had been instituted in 2015, during the administration of President Obama, which had prevented internet service providers (ISPs) from discriminating against web content or from creating separate internet fast and slow lanes.

To try to change the new policy, a number of lawsuits are challenging the FCC. Other changes may come if Congress takes on the issue of net neutrality through legislation. Some states are making their own attempts to enforce net neutrality. And some cities may create their own internet networks.

To learn what might happen under the new FCC policy, the Associated Press queried seven major internet providers about their post-net-neutrality plans. The AP summary of the current situation said that with the repeal of net neutrality, it may be time to brace for the arrival of internet “fast lanes” and “slow lanes.” The 2015 net neutrality rules prohibited such “paid prioritization,” as it’s technically known. That’s when an ISP such as Verizon or Comcast decides to charge services like YouTube or Amazon for faster access to users. Firms that decline to pay up could wind up in low priority slow lanes.

The Associated Press said all of the ISPs it contacted “equivocated” when asked if they might establish fast and slow lanes. None of the seven companies—AT&T, Charter, Comcast, Cox, Sprint and T-Mobile,

Verizon—would rule out the possibility. Most merely said they had “no plans” for paid prioritization, and a few declined to answer the question at all.

By contrast, several of these firms promised not to block or slow down specific internet sites and services, two other practices prohibited by the expiring net-neutrality rules. (Those rules won’t formally end until sometime in early 2018.) Any such move could set off a public uproar and might even trigger an antitrust investigation.

Here are the net-neutrality promises from the country’s biggest wireless and cable companies.

- **AT&T**—*Fast lanes?* No specific response. *Block or slow down sites?* Says it “will not” do so.
- **Charter**—*Fast lanes?* Says there are no plans to create them. *Block or slow down sites?* Says it doesn’t do so and has “no plans” to change that.
- **Comcast**—*Fast lanes?* Has “no plans” to create them. *Block or slow down sites?* Says it “will not” do so.
- **Cox**—*Fast lanes?* Does not plan to create them. *Block or slow down sites?* Says it doesn’t do so and has no plans to.
- **Sprint**—*Fast lanes?* No specific response. *Block or slow down sites?* Says it doesn’t block sites, but declined to address the future.
- **T-Mobile**—*Fast lanes?* No response about future plans. *Block or slow down sites?* No response about future plans.
- **Verizon**—*Fast lanes?* No specific response. *Block or slow down sites?* Says it doesn’t do so, but declined to address the future.

Meanwhile, attorneys general from 21 states have sued to block the federal changes to the Obama-era internet rules that had barred ISPs from



interfering with internet traffic and favoring their own sites and apps.

At the same time, several states have introduced bills to protect net neutrality, even though the FCC's order bars state laws from contradicting the federal government's approach.

For example, in New Mexico, two Democratic state lawmakers in late January proposed consumer protection legislation for internet users in the state. State Senator Howie Morales of Silver City and Representative Bill McCamley of Mesilla Park said that their bill would prohibit paid prioritization of internet traffic as an unfair and deceptive trade practice under the state's Unfair Practices Act, and provide funding to state prosecutors for enforcement. They say the legislation would protect small businesses, schools and families from price gouging and unequal internet access.

And will Congress take action? Even one of the ISPs has raised that possibility.

AT&T is calling on Congress to pass a net neutrality law that would cover not only ISPs but also platforms like Facebook and Google. The telecom giant took out full-page ads in major newspapers including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* on January 24, calling for an "internet bill of rights."

In the ad, AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson wrote, "Legislation would not only ensure consumers' rights are protected, but it would provide consistent rules of the road for all internet companies across all websites, content, devices and applications." AT&T had been an outspoken champion of the FCC's decision to repeal its 2015 net neutrality rules. The company also pushed Congress last year to eliminate a set of FCC privacy rules that would have required broadband companies to obtain permission from consumers

before using their data to sell targeted ads.

AT&T and most Republicans argue that the FCC's net neutrality rules were too heavy-handed and there are sufficient laws on the books to preserve an open internet. When Congress overturned the FCC privacy rules, AT&T argued that the laws unfairly subjected internet service providers to restrictions that didn't cover companies like Facebook and Google, which provide more targeted advertising.

Net neutrality supporters largely reject any attempt to legislate open internet protections, arguing that a GOP-controlled Congress would not produce rules as strong as what the FCC had in place.

"It would be a lot easier to take AT&T at their word if they hadn't spent more than \$16 million last year alone lobbying to kill net neutrality and privacy protections for internet users," said Evan Greer, an activist with the pro-net neutrality group Fight for the Future. "Internet activists have been warning for months that the big ISPs' plan has always been to gut the rules at the FCC and then use the 'crisis' they created to ram through bad legislation in the name of 'saving' net neutrality."

On January 24, after the company's ads appeared, an AT&T spokesman released a statement saying that the open letter was meant to start a dialogue and that the company had not staked out a position on fast lanes: "We want to have a dialog about it with other internet companies and consumer groups, so that Congress is considering all angles as they begin to write the rules of the road on how the internet works, particularly for new innovation and invention, like self-driving cars or augmented reality." On the local level, some cities are

looking to have new ISPs that would provide net neutrality.

For example, San Francisco is trying to find a network to build a city-wide, gigabit fiber internet service with mandated net neutrality and consumer privacy protections. It would be an open-access network, allowing multiple ISPs to offer service over the same lines and compete for customers.

The city on January 31 issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to find companies that are qualified "to design, build, finance, operate, and maintain a ubiquitous broadband fiber-to-the-premises network that permits retail service providers to lease capacity on the network." The project would also involve a free Wi-Fi service for city parks, city buildings, major thoroughfares, and visitor areas. Low-income residents would qualify for subsidies that make home internet service more affordable.

ISPs offering service over the network would not be allowed to block or throttle lawful internet traffic or engage in paid prioritization. ISPs would also need customers' opt-in consent "prior to collecting, using, disclosing, or permitting access to customer personal information or information about a customer's use of the network."

San Francisco started considering the network even before the federal government repealed broadband privacy rules and net neutrality rules. In the eyes of city officials, a city-wide fiber network would benefit residents and business regardless of whether those federal rules exist, but the latest FCC action adds urgency to the project.

The city says it will cover a portion of the costs for the multi-billion dollar project and provide or lease access to necessary city property and infrastructure. But San Francisco isn't planning



to build the network itself, a step that hundreds of smaller cities and towns have taken.

The winning bidder is “expected to assume the full performance risk,” so the biggest challenge may be finding companies willing to meet all of San Francisco’s demands. The city estimates construction would take three to five years.

On the plus side for bidding entities, San Francisco would provide payments to the builder when construction milestones are reached. The private builder would also get a share of the network’s revenue.

San Francisco says it will also “provide or lease access to City fiber, communication assets, and conduits to reduce capital costs and construction; [and] provide or lease space on City properties suitable for placement of data centers, fiber hubs, or central offices at a reasonable rate.”

The RFQ seeks up to three qualified consortia or joint ventures. The RFQ deadline is March 26. The RFQ anticipates that the city would sign a 15-year agreement with the winning bidder. Los Angeles issued a similar Request for Proposals in 2013. Another request followed in 2015, but “the city never received a workable proposal from a private company to build out the network,” according to an article last month in *Curbed Los Angeles*. The LA project may have been doomed by LA’s decision to discourage proposals that required any financial support from the city. By contrast, San Francisco is willing to chip in some money. Reported in: *Associated Press*, December 20, January 30; *The Hill*, January 24; *arstechnica.com*, February 1.

ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

A new content policy instituted by Nook Press has resulted in the termination of the accounts of numerous

self-published authors, and thus the removal of their e-books.

In August, authors began receiving notices from Nook, which is owned by Barnes & Noble, informing them that their titles are in violation of Nook’s updated content policy. The authors have been told that their titles have been removed from sale, and their accounts have been terminated.

The content policy in question states that titles subject to removal include “works portraying or encouraging incest, rape, bestiality, necrophilia, paedophilia or content that encourages hate or violence.” The policy also stipulates that it is the responsibility of authors to keep up-to-date on any changes to the policy.

A number of authors who have received the notices have taken to social media to vent their frustrations. In a blog post about the situation, author Georgette St. Clair said she would have acted to conform to the content policy, had she known it was needed. She writes: “I have never gotten a single warning or complaint from B&N about any of these titles; if I had, I would have taken it down immediately.”

Selena Kitt, another author who complained publicly about the situation, said B&N acted “without warning” in canceling her account, and the accounts of other authors. She added that B&N’s claims that she and others had violated Nook’s content guidelines rung hollow as those guidelines were “non-existent until August 16 or so. We’ve had the same content published on their site for years.”

Other authors have taken to social media to express their dismay over B&N’s move. Like St. Clair and Kitt, many complained that they were not alerted that their books had run afoul of the updated content policy, nor were they told why their books no longer conformed to new content

standards. A number of the authors also echoed Kitt’s sentiment about being puzzled why content they had sold via Nook for years was suddenly deemed inappropriate.

When asked why B&N moved so swiftly to drop titles and delete accounts, a spokesperson for the company said it was simply following procedure. “We have a policy,” the spokesperson said via email. The authors “are aware of it. We terminate when there is a violation.”

Update: Since this story was originally posted, Publishers Weekly learned that some affected authors have had their accounts reinstated by B&N. Reported in publishersweekly.com, August 23.

GOVERNMENT SPEECH

The Trump administration has informed multiple divisions within the Department of Health and Human Services that they should avoid using certain words or phrases in official documents being drafted for next year’s budget.

Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is part of HHS, were given a list of seven prohibited words or phrases during a meeting Thursday with senior CDC officials who oversee the budget. The words to avoid: “vulnerable,” “entitlement,” “diversity,” “transgender,” “fetus,” “evidence-based” and “science-based.”

A second HHS agency received similar guidance to avoid using “entitlement,” “diversity” and “vulnerable,” according to an official who took part in a briefing earlier in the week. Participants at that agency were also told to use “Obamacare” instead of ACA, or the Affordable Care Act, and to use “exchanges” instead of “marketplaces” to describe the venues where people can purchase health insurance.



At the State Department, meanwhile, certain documents now refer to sex education as “sexual risk avoidance.”

The colleague who provided the briefing at the second HHS agency relied on a document from the Office of Management and Budget detailing guidance for the fiscal 2019 budget, said the official in an interview. No explanations were given for the language changes. The HHS official spoke on the condition of anonymity because the language change information was supposed to be “close hold.” The person did not want to name the agency to protect the identity of officials involved in the talks.

It’s not clear whether other federal agencies have been instructed to avoid certain words, and if so, to what extent, in preparing their budget documents for next year. Officials interviewed at the two HHS agencies said the language restriction was unusual and a departure from previous years.

The OMB oversees the process that culminates in the president’s annual budget proposal to Congress. That budget document, usually several volumes, is generally shaped to reflect an administration’s priorities. An OMB spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

News of the directives to stop using these words and phrases drew outcry from scientific groups, researchers and advocacy organizations who took to Twitter and other social media.

Rush Holt, chief executive of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, said: “Among the words forbidden to be used in CDC budget documents are ‘evidence-based’ and ‘science-based.’ I suppose one must not think those things either. Here’s a word that’s still allowed: ridiculous.”

Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for

Transgender Equality, noted that CDC’s own research suggests that transgender people face a higher risk of being infected with HIV.

A CDC study published in August, which analyzed 9 million agency-funded HIV tests, determined that transgender women “had the highest percentage of confirmed positive results (2.7 percent) of any gender category.”

“To pretend and insist that transgender people do not exist, and to allow this lie to infect public health research and prevention is irrational and very dangerous, and not just to transgender people,” Keisling said in an email.

While HHS staffers were directly notified about how they must change the language they use when preparing budget documents, a shift is happening in other departments as well.

At the State Department, for example, employees received a guidance document on Wednesday that outlined how they should develop country operating plans under the President’s Plan for Emergency AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) for 2018. This document repeatedly uses the phrase “sexual risk avoidance,” which has been defined in recent congressional funding bills as abstinence-only practices until marriage, as the primary form of sex education.

Jen Kates, vice president and director of global health and HIV policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation, said in an interview Saturday that while the document does not specifically change how much money should be spent on abstinence-only programs under PEPFAR, the heavy emphasis on it could shift priorities on how money is spent overseas.

“It’s a change, and the language in these documents does matter, because that’s what’s communicated to the teams in the field,” Kates said, adding

that it’s “too early to tell” how this might translate into funding changes. According to a database compiled by the Foundation for AIDS Research, or Amfar, the amount of money that has been allotted for “Abstinence/Be Faithful” programs under PEPFAR fell from a high of \$258.3 million in 2008 to \$20.1 million in 2017. As a share of overall PEPFAR funding, this represented a decline from 7 percent to 1 percent.

The same guidance document includes a line touting the efficacy of abstinence-only programs, referring to “abstinence as a highly effective form of prevention.”

Several public health experts questioned that assertion, noting that multiple studies have shown that there is little evidence this form of education either delays sexual activity or reduces the number of sexual partners a person has. A nine-year congressionally mandated study concluded in 2007 that teenagers enrolled in abstinence-only programs were no more likely to refrain from having sex than those who did not enroll. Among those who did have sex, the study found, there was no difference in when they began to engage in this activity or how many partners the teens in each group had.

Jesse Boyer, senior policy manager at the Guttmacher Institute, said in an interview Saturday that the “rebranding” of abstinence programs with the term “sexual risk avoidance” would not make them more effective.

“It’s the continual promotion of a coercive and ideological agenda over what the science and research tells us what young people need to lead healthy lives,” she said.

In a statement, the State Department said Violence Against Children surveys funded by the program in 11 countries “showed that an average of 1 in 3 young women had a first sexual



experience that was forced or coerced. In light of this alarming evidence, PEPFAR has placed an even greater emphasis on activities supporting sexual risk avoidance, with a particular focus on girls ages 9-14," in the guidance.

The HHS official who received the briefing on language changes said the reaction among participants was similar to that at the CDC when budget analysts were informed they couldn't use the seven words or phrases in drafting budget materials.

"People were surprised, people were not thrilled," the HHS official said. "We all kind of looked at each other and said, 'Oh, God.'"

At the CDC, budget analysts were told they could use an alternative phrase instead of "evidence-based" or "science-based" in budget documents. That phrase is "CDC bases its recommendations on science in consideration with community standards and wishes," said a budget analyst who took part in the 90-minute briefing. No alternatives were suggested for the other words.

At the CDC, the briefing was led by a senior career civil servant in the office that oversees formulation of the agency's budget. She opened the meeting by telling participants not to use the words "vulnerable," "entitlement" and "diversity" because documents containing those words were being "flagged" by others higher up the chain in the budget process, and documents were being sent back to CDC for corrections.

The civil servant then announced the additional words—"fetus," "transgender," "evidence-based" and "science-based"—that were not to be used. Another senior CDC budget person told the group that agency budget officials conducted a search across the agency's budget documents and found that "evidence-based" and "science-based" were used so frequently that they were essentially meaningless, the analyst recalled.

In a statement, HHS spokesman Matt Lloyd said: "The assertion that HHS has 'banned words' is a complete mischaracterization of discussions regarding the budget formulation process. HHS will continue to use

the best scientific evidence available to improve the health of all Americans. HHS also strongly encourages the use of outcome and evidence data in program evaluations and budget decisions."

Lloyd declined to identify any specific inaccuracies in the *Washington Post's* report about words that are prohibited in CDC budget documents.

CDC Director Brenda Fitzgerald emailed staff late Saturday reassuring them that the agency has a history of making public health and budget decisions based on the best available science and will continue to do so. "I want to assure you that CDC remains committed to our public health mission as a science- and evidence-based institution," she wrote.

The CDC analyst said it was clear to participants that they were to avoid those seven words but only in drafting budget documents.

"What would you call it when you're told not to use those words?" the person said. "If that's not a ban, maybe I need to improve my vocabulary." Reported in: *Washington Post*, December 16.