

Dover senior loses bid to graduate with class

By DICK FARRELL

A Dover High senior, who has not successfully completed a state-mandated American Problems course, will not be allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies this Sunday. Judge Harlan Spies ruled Thursday.

The student, Debra Kaufman of 235 E. Slingluff av., brought suit against the Dover board of education, asking that it be restrained from prohibiting her participation. The suit was filed Thursday morning by her attorney, John Smith of Tuscarawas Valley Legal Services. A slim court schedule allowed the case to be heard immediately.

Spies, after hearing testimony from Miss Kaufman, her mother, Linda Kaufman, and guidance counselor Tom Kane Jr., said, "We realize that graduation comes up in conversations many times. For you, there will always be an explanation.

"If I were to rule from my heart, I would rule in your favor. But there has been established in this state minimum standards.

"Until you're entitled to a diploma, I don't think you're entitled to participate in graduation ceremonies. I do not

believe the board is capricious... is unreasonable."

SMITH, WHO said the time element does not permit an appeal, requested the board to change its policy on who may participate in graduation ceremonies at its meeting Tuesday night. The board, after hearing his arguments, took no action.

Miss Kaufman has obtained 19 credit units, one more than the required number, but she has failed two of three grading periods in American Problems. The Ohio Revised Code, as was pointed out by Spies, dictates that students must successfully complete a course in American government.

The girl testified that she is planning to make up the course this summer, which, upon successful completion, will make her eligible for a diploma.

She and her mother also admitted not reading a student handbook, which spells out specifically what is required for graduation. But, they said, they both were under the impression that she would be able to participate in graduation ceremonies.

Miss Kaufman said she was told by school officials last Friday that she would not be allowed to participate.

"**IF YOU** took a poll, I'm sure 75 per cent of her classmates would say, 'Let her graduate,'" argued Smith. He cited a case in Portage County, where a student "dropped out" of school after she had finished her state-mandated requirements. The board of education wouldn't allow her to participate in graduation ceremonies, although a judge did.

"My high school graduation was the most important graduation in my life," Smith said. "She ought not be deprived of this opportunity."

The board's counsel, Atty. Dennis Traver, argued that the requirement of finishing all state-mandated courses was not unreasonable. He said it was a matter of "respecting the authority of the board of education."

Miss Kaufman is not the only Dover High senior to who will not graduate. Five others also have not successfully completed their state-mandated requirements.