

NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 022 - Folder 016

Education - Vouchers



Michael Cohen
06/10/98 02:17:29 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP

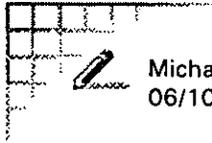
cc:

Subject: POTUS on vouchers

FYI--POTUS is in fact consistent on this issue; I checked the statement that Riley put out after the '96 debate (after he said something to the effect of "...if people in Milwaukee or Cleveland want to have vouchers, I say 'let 'er rip').

According to this statement that was carefully negotiated with his Secretary of Education, the President:

1. opposes the use of federal funds for vouchers
2. believes the use of state or local funds for vouchers are state or local decisions
3. as he said about the 1995 Cal. voucher ballot initiative, the President would personally oppose state or local voucher plans if he were a voter in a state or locality.



Michael Cohen
06/10/98 01:29:26 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: edited voucher Q&A

Attached is a slightly edited answer for the voucher question --clarifying that the President opposes using **federal** funds for vouchers:

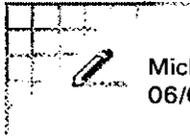
Q. The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled today that the private school voucher program in Milwaukee is constitutional. In light of the President's opposition to school vouchers, what is his view of this decision?

A. The President has not had a chance to review the Court decision. However, the President is opposed to **using federal funds** for school vouchers because he believes that we must use public funds to strengthen our public schools. We must raise standards, increase accountability, expand public school choice, and invest taxpayer resources in the steps that will make a difference, such as reducing class size, improving teaching, and modernizing our school buildings. He is opposed to diverting federal funds away from the public schools, which serve 90% of the students, when the needs there are so great. The Wisconsin Supreme Court decision does not change these views, nor the President's opposition to private school vouchers.

Message Sent To:

Joseph P. Lockhart/WHO/EOP
Barry J. Toiv/WHO/EOP
Joshua Silverman/WHO/EOP
Nanda Chitre/WHO/EOP
Elizabeth R. Newman/WHO/EOP
Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP
Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP

Tobacco - Drugs
and
Educ - vouchers



Michael Cohen
06/03/98 06:58:46 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP, Jose Cerda III/OPD/EOP

cc:

Subject: Drug Free Neighborhoods Act Alert

I just got a heads up from the Education Department and Kennedy's staff that the Coverdell-Craig-Abraham Drug-Free Neighborhoods Act amendment to the Tobacco bill may well contain a provision, offered last year by Senate Republicans, that allows federal funds to be used to give vouchers to kids who are victims of school violence, including drug-related crimes.

The overview/summary of the bill reads: **DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS:** makes it an allowable use of federal funds to provide school choice or compensation for k-12 students who are the victims of school violence, including drug-related crimes...."

In the education world, a tobacco bill that doesn't have class size reduction but does provide for vouchers would be seen as a complete disaster. I don't know where things stand in the negotiations over this amendment, but it would be great if we could indicate that this particular provision would be a deal breaker. Otherwise, the R's may be using this to set the Dems up to take responsibility for bringing down the tobacco bill.

Educ-vouchers

DRAFT
April 29, 1998
7:00 PM

Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear _____:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to S. 1502, the "District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1997," because it would authorize the use of Federal taxpayer funds to pay for private school vouchers. If this bill were presented to the President in its current form, I would recommend that he veto it.

Erin
Kryon
Porter

S. 1502 would create a program of federally funded vouchers ~~for students from low income families to use at public or private elementary and secondary schools,~~ with little or no public accountability for how these funds are used. While the President and I have long supported choice among public schools, including publicly accountable charter schools, we have repeatedly expressed our opposition to using taxpayer funds for private school vouchers, whether or not they are referred to in some other way, such as "scholarships." Moreover, the bill is apparently designed to ensure that receipt of these vouchers, unlike other Federal funds, would not require schools to comply with Federal civil rights laws that protect students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.

We need to focus on approaches that will improve education for all children instead of draining much-needed resources from the public schools, which will continue to serve the overwhelming majority of students. The D.C. public school system has intensified such efforts with its Improved Student Achievement Initiative.

Accordingly, I strongly support the substitute amendment, crafted by the District's elected Member of Congress, which would provide funds to the District for reading tutors and for demonstrations of comprehensive school reform, along the lines of the ESEA, Title I program that the Congress initiated this year at the urging of Representatives Obey and Porter. As with the bipartisan Obey-Porter initiative, Federal funds would be used to raise student achievement by assisting public schools in implementing effective, comprehensive, locally-driven reforms that are based on reliable research and effective practices, and that include an emphasis on basic academics and parental involvement. I am disappointed that the House leadership has denied the Congresswoman an opportunity to present her substitute to the full House.

~~has introduced~~ ^{have the} ~~critical~~ ^{critical} resources from a public schools and provide D.C.

Page 2

Unfortunately, instead of adopting an approach that will really make a difference for the children in the District's public schools, the bill passed by the Senate and now before the House would ask Federal taxpayers to provide up to \$3,200 to each student with a voucher, nearly eight times the average amount the Federal Government now makes available for public school children throughout the Nation. This is an extremely costly venture that could be a first step toward a nationalized voucher program at public expense that diverts funds from the critical task of improving America's public schools for all students. Choice among private schools should be paid for with private funds, with public funds used to provide choice among public schools.

I appreciate the genuine interest of the Congress in responding to the educational needs of the District's children, but I strongly oppose S. 1502 because it would permit Federal funds to be used for private school tuition. Accordingly, I would recommend that the President veto it.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program and that enactment of S. 1502 would not be in accord with the President's program.

Yours sincerely,

Richard W. Riley

DRAFT – NOT FOR RELEASE

April 29, 1998
(House)

S. 1502 - District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act
(Coats (R) Indiana and 4 cosponsors)

The Administration strongly opposes S. 1502 because it would appropriate Federal taxpayer funds to pay for private school vouchers. If this bill were presented to the President, the President's senior advisers would recommend that the bill be vetoed.

S. 1502 would create a program of Federally funded vouchers for students from low-income families to use at public or private elementary and secondary schools, with little or no public accountability for how those funds are used. Moreover, the bill is apparently designed to ensure that receipt of these vouchers, unlike other Federal funds, would not require schools to comply with Federal civil rights laws that protect students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.

Instead of investing additional resources in public schools, vouchers would allow a few selected students to attend private schools, and would draw attention away from the hard work of reforming public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of D.C. students. Efforts should focus on approaches that will improve education for all children. The D.C. public school system has intensified such efforts with its Improved Student Achievement Initiative.

Under S. 1502, Federal taxpayers would be asked to provide up to \$3,200 to each student with a voucher, nearly eight times the amount the Federal Government now makes available for public school children throughout the Nation. Establishing a private school voucher system in the Nation's Capital would set a dangerous precedent for using Federal taxpayer funds for schools that are not accountable to the public. This would be an extremely costly venture that could be a first step toward a nationalized voucher program at public expense. Choice among private schools should be paid for with private funds, with public funds used to provide choice among public schools.

Pay-As-You-Go Scoring

S. 1502 would increase direct spending; therefore it is subject to the pay-as-you-go requirement of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1990. The bill does not contain provisions to offset the increased direct spending. If the bill were enacted, it could contribute to a sequester of mandatory programs.

OMB's preliminary scoring estimate is that this bill would increase direct spending by a total of \$7 million in FYs 1998 and 1999. Final scoring of this legislation may deviate from this estimate. If S. 1502 were enacted, final OMB scoring estimates would be published within seven working days of enactment, as required by OBRA. The cumulative effects of all enacted legislation on direct spending and receipts will be reported to Congress at the end of the Congressional session, as required by OBRA.

(Do Not Distribute Outside Executive Office of the President)

This Statement of Administration Policy was developed by the Legislative Reference Division (Gibbons), in consultation with the Departments of Education (Riddle), Justice (Taylor), and the Treasury (Dorsey), OMB/DC Issue Coordinator (Jeffers), HR (Cassell), HTF (Occomy), OIRA (Chenok), and BRD (Balis).

WHC, DPC, WHLA, and OMB/GC did not respond to our request for views.

S. 1502 passed the Senate by unanimous consent on November 9, 1997.

Administration Position to Date

The Administration has not formally taken a position on S. 1502. S. 1502, however, is identical to the school voucher provisions of H.R. 2607, the FY 1998 appropriations bill for the District of Columbia (DC), as passed by the House last fall. These provisions were the subject of a senior advisers veto threat that was issued in an October 9, 1997, SAP sent to the House on H.R. 2607. The Senate subsequently deleted the voucher provisions from the DC appropriations bill and passed them as a free-standing bill (S. 1502).

Provisions of S. 1502

S. 1502 would authorize the establishment of the District of Columbia Scholarship Corporation (Corporation) as a private, nonprofit corporation to administer, publicize, and evaluate the DC scholarship program and to determine student and school eligibility for program participation.

S. 1502 would establish the District of Columbia Scholarship Fund (Fund), to be administered by the Secretary of the Treasury. The bill would authorize appropriations to the Fund for FY 1998 through 2002. Appropriated funds would be disbursed annually to the Fund to be used by the Corporation for scholarships, contracts, and administrative costs. S. 1502 would appropriate \$7 million as an initial Federal contribution to the Fund and this would result in pay-as-you-go scoring costs in FYs 1998 and 1999.

The Corporation would be authorized to award tuition scholarships and enhanced achievement scholarships to DC students in kindergarten through grade 12 with family incomes not exceeding 185 percent of the national poverty line. Priority would be given to students who are currently enrolled in a DC public school or preparing to enter a DC public kindergarten. The Corporation must implement a schedule and procedures for processing applications and awarding scholarships, including establishing deadlines for the scholarship application and award process and a list of certified eligible institutions.

A tuition scholarship may not exceed \$3,200 for FY 1998 for students whose family income is equal to or below the poverty line. A tuition scholarship may not exceed \$2,400 for FY 1998 for

students whose family income is greater than the poverty line but not more than 185 percent of the poverty line. Enhanced achievement scholarships may not exceed \$500 for FY 1998.

Each eligible institution participating in the scholarship program must annually report to the Corporation on student achievement, grade advancement, disciplinary actions taken, college admission rates, parental involvement, etc.

S. 1502 would require the Comptroller General to contract with an independent evaluation agency to perform a program appraisal. The bill would authorize appropriations of \$250,000 for such appraisal. The Corporation would be required to submit annual program progress reports to the appropriate congressional committees. The annual report must review how scholarship funds were expended and initial academic achievement levels of students who have participated in the program.

Pay-As-You-Go Scoring

Per HRD (Cassell) and BASD (Balis), S. 1502 is subject to the pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) requirement of OBRA because it increases direct spending. OMB preliminarily scores this bill as increasing direct spending by a total of \$7 million in FYs 1998 and 1999. There is no CBO position available at this time.

Legislative Reference Division
April 29, 1998

Educ-vouchers

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

April 30, 1998
(House)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

(THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN COORDINATED BY OMB WITH THE CONCERNED AGENCIES.)

S. 1502 - District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act (Coats (R) Indiana and 4 cosponsors)

The Administration strongly opposes S. 1502 because it would appropriate Federal taxpayer funds to pay for private school vouchers. If this bill were presented to the President, the President's senior advisers would recommend that the bill be vetoed.

S. 1502 would create a program of Federally funded vouchers that would divert critical resources that should be devoted to our public education priorities to private schools, with little or no public accountability for how funds are used. Moreover, the bill is apparently designed to ensure that receipt of these vouchers, unlike other Federal funds, would not require schools to comply with Federal civil rights laws that protect students from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.

Instead of investing additional resources in public schools, vouchers would allow a few selected students to attend private schools, and would draw attention away from the hard work of reforming public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of D.C. students. Efforts should focus on approaches that will improve education for all children. The D.C. public school system has intensified such efforts with its Improved Student Achievement Initiative.

Under S. 1502, Federal taxpayers would be asked to provide up to \$3,200 to each student with a voucher, nearly eight times the amount the Federal Government now makes available for public school children throughout the Nation. Establishing a private school voucher system in the Nation's Capital would set a dangerous precedent for using Federal taxpayer funds for schools that are not accountable to the public. This would be an extremely costly venture that could be a first step toward a nationalized voucher program at public expense. Choice among private schools should be paid for with private funds, with public funds used to provide choice among public schools.

Pay-As-You-Go Scoring

S. 1502 would increase direct spending; therefore it is subject to the pay-as-you-go requirement of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1990. The bill does not contain provisions to offset the increased direct spending. If the bill were enacted, it could contribute to a sequester of mandatory programs.

OMB's preliminary scoring estimate is that this bill would increase direct spending by a total of \$7 million in FYs 1998 and 1999. Final scoring of this legislation may deviate from this estimate. If S. 1502 were enacted, final OMB scoring estimates would be published within seven working days of enactment, as required by OBRA. The cumulative effects of all enacted legislation on direct spending and receipts will be reported to Congress at the end of the Congressional session, as required by OBRA.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 6, 1998

MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD K. ARMEY

DATE: March 6, 1998
LOCATION: Oval Office
TIME: 11:00-11:30 am
FROM: Larry Stein
Janet Murguia

I. PURPOSE

To respond to House Republican Majority Leader Armeý's request for a meeting with you regarding legislation to create a scholarship program for students currently in the District of Columbia school system.

II. BACKGROUND

Rep. Armeý has had a longstanding interest regarding the status of the D.C. school system. He has been a part of private sector funding efforts to provide scholarships to D.C. students and has been a personal sponsor of students in the past. It is expected that he will convey to you his sincere interest in addressing the pressing problems confronting the D.C. school system. You should note that Rep. Armeý is a staunch supporter of school vouchers.

Legislative History

Last year, during consideration of the D.C. Appropriations bill, a voucher provision was added to the bill in the House Committee by D.C. Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Taylor (R-NC). That provision, called the D.C. Student Opportunity Scholarship Act, would authorize establishment of a private, non-profit corporation to administer, publicize and evaluate a District scholarship program and determine student and school eligibility for program participation. Funds would be appropriated and allocated to the D.C. Scholarship Fund for FY98 through 2002. It would authorize the Corporation to award tuition scholarships and enhanced achievement scholarships to D.C. K-12 students with family incomes not exceeding 185% of poverty level.

When the appropriations bill came to the floor of the House, Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA) offered an amendment to strike the voucher provision along with a number of other provisions in the bill which were viewed as "micro managing" D.C. affairs. That amendment failed on a 197-212 vote, with 1 member voting

present. The subsequent vote on final passage of the bill --still containing the D.C. voucher provision --was a 203-202 vote with 1 member again voting present. The decisive vote on passage was Speaker Gingrich's, and the vote occurred after a very prolonged "17 minutes" with a great deal of obvious arm twisting on the House floor by the Republican leadership. On that final passage vote, all Democrats voting opposed the bill and 11 Republicans voted against the bill.

In the Senate, the Committee-reported appropriations bill did not include the school voucher provision, but it was offered as a Coats-Lieberman Amendment. A filibuster ensued on which there was one cloture vote which was rejected on a 58-41 vote. On that vote, four Democrats supported cloture: Breaux, Landrieu, Lieberman, and Moynihan. One Republican opposed cloture: Chafee. It is important to remember that this was a cloture vote; therefore, some Senators who oppose vouchers may have voted for the cloture motion because they object to filibusters. Senator Jeffords falls into that category if past votes hold true. And Sen. Leahy was not present. Rather than continue the filibuster and disrupt plans to adjourn, the Senate sponsors agreed not to pursue this as an amendment.

The conference version of the D.C. Appropriations bill did not include a voucher provision. Instead, Senators Coats, Lieberman, Landrieu, Gregg and Brownback offered it as a free-standing bill, S. 1502, which was then passed on a voice vote and sent to the House where it is pending. This was part of an agreement which allowed the House and Senate to adjourn for the end of the first session of Congress last year.

It is critical to note that Senators Daschle and Kennedy only agreed to the free-standing bill because of the Administration's assurance that if this bill ever reached the White House it would be vetoed. At that time Education Secretary Riley, the NEA, AFT, and others in the education community pushed very hard for a strong veto threat from the Administration.

Administration Initiatives

While Rep. Armev and other voucher supporters view vouchers as a way to help students escape from failing D.C. schools, your Administration has chosen to strengthen the D.C. schools instead. The Education Department has provided technical assistance to help the D.C. schools raise academic standards, adopt new tests, strengthen accountability, and working with area universities, helped create the D.C. Reads program. As a result, area college students are tutoring in 16 of the lowest performing schools.

The Education Department will make available up to \$5 million in FY 1998 discretionary funding to the D.C. schools, to help provide reading specialists in elementary schools, summer school programs for students who do not meet

standards, and professional development for teachers and principals.

Your FY 1998 budget request includes \$20 million for a program of assistance to the D.C. schools. With this funding the District will be able to:

- Place a reading specialist in all 148 of its schools (\$7.4 million);
- Provide a full day of summer school for approximately 15,000 students (\$3.78 million);
- Implement comprehensive reforms in every school (\$7.4 million); and
- Provide a comprehensive program of teacher and principal professional development (\$1.42 million).

III. PARTICIPANTS

The President
Rep. Richard K. Armey
Erskine Bowles
Larry Stein

Pre-Brief
Erskine Bowles
John Podesta
Larry Stein
Frank Raines
Bruce Reed
Gene Sperling

IV. PRESS PLAN

Closed press.

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

As usual.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

Department of Education talking points on private school vouchers

KEY POINTS ON PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

- Vouchers undermine public education by shifting taxpayers' money from public schools into schools that can exclude students on the basis of their ability to pay, or their academic achievement. If vouchers are enacted, significant amounts of funds would be immediately drained from public schools.
- Moreover, vouchers would shift taxpayers' dollars into schools that are not accountable to the community, or to any public authority. They also undermine community control and responsibility for strong schools. Unlike charter schools and other public school accountability measures, there is no mechanism for accountability in private school voucher plans. Ineffective schools that do not meet community expectations and needs can be funded under voucher proposals. Opponents of the 1994 California voucher proposal pointed out the potential danger of even more extreme situations, given the eligibility under voucher plans of even "witch covens and the KKK" to start schools and receive public funds.
- Vouchers are not the best way to help parents and students escape ineffective and disorderly schools. Public school choice, charter schools, and mechanisms allowing parents to close and restructure failing schools can provide more effective alternatives, while preserving the concept of community-based public schools. Studies of voucher programs in Milwaukee and in England show no evidence that students who participate in private school choice programs do better academically than comparable students in public schools. Many studies of public school choice, and evidence from individual charter schools, show a positive effect on student achievement.
- Vouchers would undermine private education. Inevitable abuses -- or even concerns about potential abuses -- under a voucher program would incite efforts to bring private schools under public regulation. This would effectively end the independence of this important alternative to public education in American life. Last year, even Pat Buchanan warned against the negative effect of vouchers on private schools.
- Due to these problems and others, vouchers polarize and politicize the public discussion about improving schools, draining away the time, energies, and hard work we all need to put into improving schools. Indeed, voucher proposals have prevented and delayed the enactment of promising and otherwise popular education reform measures.
- To have real choice for parents, but to retain strong accountability, states should instead provide for public school choice and charter schools, challenge all public schools to raise their standards of discipline and achievement, and enact tough accountability measures for all public schools.

UNITED STATES

Education - vouchers

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

12-8-97

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COS
both sides



Lessons Cleveland can teach

CLEVELAND, OHIO

ST VINCENT DEPAUL elementary school in Cleveland looks like any other Catholic school in America: eager pupils, orderly classrooms, smart uniforms. But in one way it is unique: the state of Ohio pays many of its pupils' tuition fees.

Cleveland has the only school voucher programme in the country that allows poor pupils to attend the school of their choice, secular or religious. Eligible families are reimbursed for 90% of their tuition costs, up to \$2,500. (The average expenditure per pupil in Cleveland's public schools is roughly \$6,500; tuition at private schools costs, on average, about \$2,000.) The Ohio legislature created the programme in 1996 for Cleveland pupils from entry to the end of third grade: that is, between the ages of six and eight. In the first year, more than 6,000 children applied for 2,000 places in the scheme. Vouchers (called "scholarships", which sounds better) were given to all children with family incomes below 200% of the poverty line; some more were awarded by lottery. The programme has been expanded to include 3,000 pupils up to fourth grade (age 9-10) at 55 private schools, including two Islamic academies.

Has it made any difference? A recent report by the Harvard Programme on Education Policy and Governance suggests that it has. The study* surveyed roughly 1,000 par-

ents whose children received vouchers and attended a private school in 1996-97 and 1,000 parents whose children applied for the programme but did not enroll. Two-thirds of the voucher parents reported that they were "very satisfied" with the academic quality of their school, compared with fewer than a third of the public-school parents. The voucher parents were also twice as likely to be "very satisfied" with the safety, discipline, moral values and individual attention offered by their schools.

And the children are doing better. The researchers examined test scores for roughly 20% of the voucher pupils. These gained, on average, five percentage points in reading and 15 points in maths, compared with national norms. The only decline was in first-grade language skills.

The Cleveland programme challenges some assumptions about how private schools and parents respond to the market. Private schools did not close their doors to the poorest pupils. About 75% of the voucher students are poor, and two-thirds are black. Nor did the private schools purge themselves of the most difficult pupils at the end of the first year. Fewer than 0.5% of parents reported that their children had been expelled. In choosing schools, Cleveland's parents punctured the patronising notion that poor families will select a

school for the "wrong" reasons. Among scholarship parents, 85% said academic quality was a "very important" reason for taking part in the voucher programme, and 79% said that safety was.

Meanwhile, the supply of private schools has expanded to fill the demand. In the autumn of 1996 a local businessman, David Brennan, founded two schools, Hope Central Academy and Hope Ohio City. Mr Brennan knows a lot about teaching basic skills. In the process of buying and turning round more than 30 companies, he realised that a third of the employees he encountered were illiterate and two-thirds could not do basic mathematics. He developed and implemented a remedial education programme. When he offered to share his programme with the public schools, however, he spent three years "treading water". So, after the Cleveland voucher programme was set up, Mr Brennan decided to start his own schools. The Hope academies now have 350 voucher pupils.

The Cleveland programme has had its logistical challenges. All scholarship pupils are entitled to public transport, but, with children going all over the city, the network is complex. Some pupils take buses, others are shuttled in minivans, and some arrive at school every day by taxi. And, because poor families move home frequently and often do not have telephones, the programme directors have had a difficult time locating children who are awarded scholarships. When they were contacted for the Harvard survey, more than 40% of the families that were awarded scholarships but did not enroll said they were not aware they had been selected.

In the end, the programme's fate will probably be decided in the courts, not the classroom. A coalition of groups, including Ohio's two largest teachers' unions, challenged the constitutionality of the voucher programme in 1996, on the ground that it violates the separation of church and state. A lower court upheld the constitutionality of the programme, but the decision was reversed on appeal. The state's Supreme Court has ruled that the programme should continue for a year while the lawyers fight it out. Eventually the issue will go to the Supreme Court in Washington, says David Strauss, a law professor at the University of Chicago. If the Cleveland programme is ruled unconstitutional, the pupils concerned will have to pay their own

* "An Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship Programme." By Jay Green, William Howell and Paul Peterson. September 1997

UNITED STATES

tuition costs or return to the public schools.

The political battles too will be fierce. At the annual gathering of Republican governors last weekend, education was the top policy issue. Now that welfare reform is under way, Republicans see school choice as the next big opportunity to distinguish themselves from their Democratic rivals. Public opinion is shifting in their favour. In a 1993 Gallup poll, 74% of those surveyed opposed spending public money on private schools. By 1997, opinion was nearly split on the issue. A majority of blacks now support vouchers. Some black Democrats, such as Floyd Flake, a congressman from New York, have gone so far as to defy their party elders and support the idea.

With such writing on the blackboard, the teachers' unions have reached deep

into their pockets to fight the spectre of competition. The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers contributed nearly \$5m to political candidates in the 1996 election cycle. A striking 98% of that money went to Democrats. It is little wonder that President Clinton has threatened to veto any voucher plan for the District of Columbia. But the more Democrats side with their friends in the unions, the more Republicans will seize the opportunity to paint them as Big Labour's tools.

It is not a strong interest in the constitution that has fired the public-school teachers. Many of them fear, with reason, that an exodus from the public schools may cost them their jobs, or at least a chunk of their pay. Teachers in Cleveland's public schools

earn an average yearly salary of \$41,000 and have lifetime tenure. Teachers at the New Hope academies earn about half as much and have one-year contracts.

So far, the city's public schools have not felt much of a pinch from the voucher programme. Only 3,000 of the system's 73,000 students can take their money to a private school. Still, for the first time Cleveland's superintendent of schools has demanded that all public schools in the system should set academic goals for which they will be held accountable. Two non-performing schools were recently "reconstituted", meaning that the principal and all the teachers were replaced. (Alas, most were simply reassigned to other schools.) Ten other schools have been placed on a watch list and may face reconstitution in turn if

The sansculotte governor

MIAMI

IT IS hard to be cross during a winter weekend in Miami, and most of the bigwigs who gathered there for the Republican Governors' Conference seemed suitably relaxed. Newt Gingrich, the House speaker, pottered down to breakfast brandishing his latest literary infatuation, Paul Johnson's "The History of the American People". Frank Keating, governor of Oklahoma, teased journalists with hints of his presidential ambitions; John Engler, Michigan's rotund governor, wafted about in a daringly bright T-shirt. But one participant managed to be angry. This was Arne Carlson, Minnesota's governor, who gets feistily furious whenever conversation turns to schools.

Mr Carlson believes that poor parents, not just rich ones, should have a say about which school their children go to. This year he got a tax break through Minnesota's Democratic legislature, which is designed to help poor families escape from government schools if they prefer to do so. The pressure of competition, says the governor, is the best way to make public schools improve themselves. The resistance of Democrats, teachers and other defenders of the existing school system makes him see red.

The *New York Times*, declares Mr Carlson, is "dishonest": its editorials oppose school choice, yet its proprietors would never dream of forgoing their freedom to choose private schools for their own children. Many Democrats in Congress also oppose school choice: yet not one, claims Mr Carlson, has children in the public schools of Washington, DC. When Franklin Roosevelt led America in war, people wanted to know that his own son was fighting; Mr Carlson now de-

mands to know why President Clinton did not send his daughter to a public school before she went to Stanford University. "We were once told that we should eat breadcrumbs, and the lady who said that went to the guillotine," remarks (slightly inaccurately) the sansculotte governor; "now we are being told the same thing again."

Mr Carlson's strictures were part of a pattern at Miami last weekend. On several issues, Republicans struck populist poses. Support for school vouchers allows Republicans to say they support poor pupils, and to attack the Democrats for siding with teachers at the kids' expense. Similarly, the Republicans champion "pay-cheque protection", a scheme to protect humble union members from having to pay compulsory dues to union bosses, which get spent on political causes that the bosses choose.

The Republicans also see populist potential in a ballot initiative in California that would prevent schools from having children taught in Spanish without their parents' permission. Most Latinos in California are said to support this, believing their children will prosper more if they master English. But it is hated by Latino politicians, who fear Anglicisation will erode their power base.

The baldest statement of populism came from Jim Nicholson, chairman of the Republican National Committee. He had the nerve to accuse Democrats of scorning normal Americans and hobnobbing with the rich. "If you're tired of working five months out of the year just to



Carlson, avec cardigan

pay your taxes, the Democrats say that you're selfish... But if you've got a big fat wallet, if you've got a big chequebook, well come on down and have yourself some coffee," Mr Nicholson railed.

There have been intriguing switches in party line before now. Republicans have been, at various times, isolationist and internationalist; they have enjoyed blacks' allegiance, then lost it almost completely. But some of the current populism is still preposterous. Republicans raise many times more money from big business than Democrats do, and the conference in Miami was crawling with corporate lobbyists. Indeed, the jollity was underwritten by a host of generous sponsors, whose names were posted proudly in the lobby of the conference hotel.

Education - vouchers

Private School Vouchers

The President strongly opposes any legislation allowing the use of federal taxpayer funds for vouchers. Vouchers would diminish the country's commitment to public education by siphoning critical dollars from neighborhood public schools into a voucher program that would support private academies for a very limited number of students.

Ninety percent of the children in America attend public schools. Public schools do face a host of challenges -- every city especially faces problems with large numbers of poor children

and often old facilities and other difficult challenges. *But the answer is to put competition, change, excellence, accountability back into the public school system, not to take limited funds away from it.*

Instead of abandoning public schools, the Clinton administration is providing resources for proven reform efforts including raising standards so that schools, teachers, principals, and students are held accountable, increasing parental involvement, improving teacher training and recruitment, and getting drugs out of the schools and more discipline into the schools. Where schools are failing, local and state education officials must step in and redesign them, or close them down and reopen them with new, more effective leadership and staff who will raise standards, put into place effective reforms and create safe, disciplined learning environments where students can succeed.



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

1629 K St., NW, Suite 1010
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone: 202/466-3311
Fax: 202/466-3485
TTY: 202/785-3859

Support Existing Anti-Discrimination Laws: Oppose the HELP Bill, HR 2724

October 29, 1997

The Honorable Sidney R. Yates
U.S. House of Representatives
2109 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Yates:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to vote against the Helping Empower Low-Income Parents (HELP) Scholarship bill (HR 2724). We strongly oppose exempting taxpayer-supported schools from federal civil rights laws.

The HELP bill would change existing law to permit federal dollars to finance education programs without requiring any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Age Discrimination Act). Under current law, schools that receive federal funds, including federal aid paid directly to students or parents for educational use, must abide by federal laws prohibiting discrimination in federally funded education programs. However, HR 2724 rewrites the law to permit private schools to receive federal dollars and to allow them to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ethnicity, disability, and age.

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Attached is more detailed information on why we oppose the HELP bill. If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Zirkin, American Association of University Women, at 202/785-7720, Debbie Brake, National Women's Law Center, at 202/588-5180, or Wade Henderson, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, at 202/466-3311.

Sincerely,

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
American Association of University Women
National Women's Law Center

-over-

American Association for Affirmative Action
American Civil Liberties Union
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
American Ethical Union, Washington Ethical Action Office
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Catholics for a Free Choice
Center for Women Policy Studies
Friends Committee on National Legislation
General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church
Hadassah
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
NAACP
National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium
National Association for Female Executives
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Black Women's Health Project
National Urban League
National Women's Conference
NAWE: Advancing Women in Higher Education
NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund
Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union
Project Equality, Incorporated
United Church of Christ, Office for Church in Society
Women Employed Institute
Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press
Women's Legal Defense Fund
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

The attached letter went to →

Rep. Abercrombie	Rep. Cummings	Rep. Gibbons	Rep. Lampson
Rep. Ackerman	Rep. Danner	Rep. Gilchrest	Rep. Lantos
Rep. Allen	Rep. Davis	Rep. Gilman	Rep. Lazio
Rep. Andrews	Rep. Davis	Rep. Gonzalez	Rep. Leach
Rep. Baesler	Rep. DeFazio	Rep. Goode	Rep. Levin
Rep. Baldacci	Rep. DeGette	Rep. Gordon	Rep. Lewis
Rep. Bartia	Rep. Delahunt	Rep. Granger	Rep. Lipinski
Rep. Barrett	Rep. DeLauro	Rep. Green	Rep. LoBiondo
Rep. Bass	Rep. Dellums	Rep. Greenwood	Rep. Lofgren
Rep. Becerra	Rep. Deutsch	Rep. Gutierrez	Rep. Lowey
Rep. Bentsen	Rep. Dicks	Rep. Hall	Rep. Luther
Rep. Bereuter	Rep. Dingell	Rep. Hamilton	Rep. Maloney
Rep. Berman	Rep. Dixon	Rep. Harman	Rep. Maloney
Rep. Berry	Rep. Doggett	Rep. Hastings	Rep. Manton
Rep. Bilbray	Rep. Dooley	Rep. Hefner	Rep. Markey
Rep. Bishop	Rep. Doyle	Rep. Hilliard	Rep. Martinez
Rep. Blagojevich	Rep. Dunn	Rep. Hinchey	Rep. Mascara
Rep. Blumenauer	Rep. Edwards	Rep. Hinojosa	Rep. Matsui
Rep. Boehlert	Rep. Ehrlich	Rep. Holden	Rep. McCarthy
Rep. Bonior	Rep. Engel	Rep. Hooley	Rep. McCarthy
Rep. Bono	Rep. Eshoo	Rep. Horn	Rep. McDermott
Rep. Borski	Rep. Etheridge	Rep. Houghton	Rep. McGovern
Rep. Boswell	Rep. Evans	Rep. Hoyer	Rep. McHale
Rep. Boucher	Rep.	Rep. Jackson	Rep. McHugh
Rep. Boyd	Falepmavaega	Rep. Jackson-Lee	Rep. McInnis
Rep. Brown	Rep. Farr	Rep. Jefferson	Rep. McIntyre
Rep. Brown	Rep. Fattah	Rep. John	Rep. McKinney
Rep. Brown	Rep. Fawell	Rep. Johnson	Rep. McNulty
Rep. Campbell	Rep. Fazio	Rep. Johnson	Rep. Meehan
Rep. Capps	Rep. Filner	Rep. Johnson	Rep. Meek
Rep. Cardin	Rep. Flake	Rep. Kanjorski	Rep. Menendez
Rep. Carson	Rep. Foglietta	Rep. Kaptur	Rep. Millender-
Rep. Castle	Rep. Foley	Rep. Kelly	McDonald
Rep. Christian-	Rep. Ford	Rep. Kennedy	Rep. Miller
Green	Rep. Fowler	Rep. Kennedy	Rep. Minge
Rep. Clay	Rep. Fox	Rep. Kennelly	Rep. Mink
Rep. Clayton	Rep. Frank	Rep. Kildee	Rep. Moakley
Rep. Clement	Rep. Franks	Rep. Kilpatrick	Rep. Mollohan
Rep. Clyburn	Rep.	Rep. Kind	Rep. Moran
Rep. Condit	Frelinghuysen	Rep. Kleczka	Rep. Morella
Rep. Conyers	Rep. Frost	Rep. Klink	Rep. Murtha
Rep. Cooksey	Rep. Furse	Rep. Klug	Rep. Nadler
Rep. Costello	Rep. Ganske	Rep. Kolbe	Rep. Neal
Rep. Coyne	Rep. Gejdenson	Rep. Kuchinich	Rep. Norton
Rep. Cramer	Rep. Gephardt	Rep. LaFalce	Rep. Oberstar

Rep. Obey	Rep. Skaggs
Rep. Oliver	Rep. Skelton
Rep. Ortiz	Rep. Slaughter
Rep. Owens	Rep. Smith
Rep. Pallone	Rep. Snyder
Rep. Pascrell	Rep. Spratt
Rep. Pastor	Rep. Stabenow
Rep. Payne	Rep. Stark
Rep. Pelosi	Rep. Stenholm
Rep. Peterson	Rep. Stokes
Rep. Pickett	Rep. Strickland
Rep. Pomeroy	Rep. Stupak
Rep. Porter	Rep. Tanner
Rep. Poshard	Rep. Tauscher
Rep. Price	Rep. Taylor
Rep. Pryce	Rep. Thomas
Rep. Rahall	Rep. Thompson
Rep. Ramstad	Rep. Thune
Rep. Rangel	Rep. Thurman
Rep. Redmond	Rep. Tierney
Rep. Reyes	Rep. Torres
Rep. Rivers	Rep. Towns
Rep. Rodriguez	Rep. Traficant
Rep. Roemer	Rep. Turner
Rep. Rogan	Rep. Underwood
Rep. Romero	Rep. Upton
Barcelo	Rep. Velazquez
Rep. Rothman	Rep. Vento
Rep. Roukema	Rep. Visclosky
Rep. Roybal	Rep. Waters
Allard	Rep. Watkins
Rep. Rush	Rep. Watt
Rep. Sabo	Rep. Waxman
Rep. Sanchez	Rep. Wexler
Rep. Sanders	Rep. Weygand
Rep. Sandlin	Rep. White
Rep. Sawyer	Rep. Wise
Rep. Schiff	Rep. Woolsey
Rep. Schumer	Rep. Wynn
Rep. Scott	Rep. Yates
Rep. Serrano	
Rep. Shaw	
Rep. Shays	
Rep. Sherman	
Rep. Sisisky	

SUPPORT EXISTING FEDERAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS: OPPOSE H.R. 2724

The "Helping Empower Low-income Parents Scholarships Amendments of 1997," H.R. 2724, would change existing law to permit federal dollars to finance education programs without requiring any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act). H.R. 2724 would create new "voluntary public and private school choice programs" in which federal education dollars are funneled through parents to public and private schools, while specifically exempting these dollars from civil rights laws that prohibit federally-funded schools from discriminating on the basis of sex, race, national origin, ethnicity, disability, or age.

- **The bill would permit federal dollars to support education programs that discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ethnicity, disability or age.** Under current law, schools that receive federal funds in any form, including federal aid paid directly to students or parents for educational use, must abide by federal laws prohibiting discrimination in federally-funded education programs.¹ These laws protect students, and others, from discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, disability and age in federally-funded education programs. H.R. 2724, however, rewrites the law to permit schools to receive federal dollars under this program unconditionally, without any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws.²
- **H.R. 2724 allows private schools that receive federal funds to discriminate against students.** Without the protection of the federal civil rights laws, private schools could receive federal funding under the newly created school choice program, yet discriminate against students in admissions, access to course offerings, guidance counselling, extra-curricular activities, facilities, and in other aspects of education, in ways long recognized to violate federal law. For example, under H.R. 2724, private schools could permit widespread and severe racial harassment of students in class, provide female students with inferior athletic facilities, and refuse to make any accommodations for disabled students. In short, federal funding to schools under this program would come with a free ticket to ignore the civil rights laws that have protected students in federally-funded education programs from harmful discrimination for decades.

¹**Grove City College v. Bell, 465 U.S. 555, 563-70 (1984).** While Congress subsequently overturned those aspects of the Court's decision in *Grove City* that restricted the scope of federal civil rights laws, it left intact the Court's ruling that a private college that did not otherwise receive federal aid had to comply with federal civil rights laws because it indirectly received such aid by enrolling students who paid their tuition with federal education grants.

²**Public schools participating in the school choice program would still have to comply with federal civil rights laws as long as they received federal funds through other sources.**

The civil rights laws must not be sacrificed in the name of educational "choice." Parents should not have to sacrifice their children's civil rights in order to secure a quality education. It is not an acceptable "choice" to provide parents with federal dollars to spend on their child's education, while taking away the longstanding protections of federal civil rights laws. These laws are far too important to this Nation's history, and to our continuing obligation to ensure that no student is kept from reaching his or her potential because of unlawful discrimination, to exempt any federally-funded education program from coverage under the civil rights laws.

For additional information, contact:

**Deborah Brake
National Women's Law Center
(202) 588-5180**

**Nancy Zirkin
American Association of University Women
(202) 785-7720**

October 27, 1997

Support Existing Anti-Discrimination Laws: Oppose the HELP Bill, HR 2724

October 29, 1997

The Honorable [REDACTED] First [REDACTED] Last [REDACTED] Suffix [REDACTED]
U.S. House of Representatives
[REDACTED] Address House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative [REDACTED] Last [REDACTED]:

On behalf of the 160,000 members of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to vote against the Helping Empower Low-Income Parents (HELP) Scholarship bill (HR 2724). AAUW opposes the diversion of public funds to private or religious schools and believes that taxpayer-supported schools should not be exempted from federal civil rights laws.

School voucher programs fail to address the real needs of the public education system and would divert already scarce funds earmarked for school improvement away from public schools. AAUW believes that the appropriate strategy to improve school systems is to direct additional resources toward improving public schools rather than diverting public funds into private institutions.

The HELP bill would change existing law to permit federal dollars to finance education programs without requiring any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Age Discrimination Act). Under current law, schools that receive federal funds, including federal aid paid directly to students or parents for educational use, must abide by federal laws prohibiting discrimination in federally funded education programs. However, HR 2724 rewrites the law to permit private schools to receive federal dollars and to allow them to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ethnicity, disability, and age.

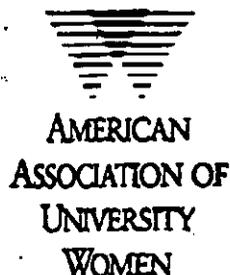
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Again, I strongly urge you to oppose the HELP bill. If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Zirkin, Director of Government Relations, at 202/785-7720, or Cindy Brown, Senior Legislative Associate, at 202/785-7730.

Sincerely,

Sandy Bernard
President

1111 SIXTEENTH STREET NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20036 202/785-7700 FAX: 202/872-1425 TDD: 202/785-7777
e-mail: info@mail.aauw.org http://www.aauw.org



Ed - vouchers

Support Existing Anti-Discrimination Laws: Oppose the HELP Bill, HR 2724

October 29, 1997



The Honorable [REDACTED] (First) [REDACTED] (Last) [REDACTED] (Suffix)
U.S. House of Representatives
[REDACTED] Address House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

1629 "K" St., NW, Suite 1010
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone: 202/466-3311
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U.S. House of Representatives
2109 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
American Association of University Women
National Women's Law Center

-over-

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American Civil Liberties Union
American Jewish Committee
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For additional information, contact:

**Deborah Brake
National Women's Law Center
(202) 588-5180**

**Nancy Zirkin
American Association of University Women
(202) 785-7720**

October 27, 1997



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

Educatic - vouchers

October 30, 1997
(House)

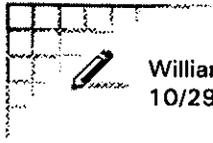
STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

(THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN COORDINATED BY OMB WITH THE CONCERNED AGENCIES.)

H.R. 2746 - Helping Empower Low-income Parents (HELP)
Scholarships Amendments of 1997
(Rep. Riggs (R) CA and 11 others)

The Administration strongly opposes H.R. 2746. If the bill were presented to the President, his senior advisers would recommend that the bill be vetoed. Under H.R. 2746, States and local school districts could provide vouchers for basic instruction in private schools, using funds that are otherwise available for the supplementary costs of education reform under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Federal funding of private school vouchers is bad policy because it would divert needed attention and resources from the Nation's public schools, which serve approximately 90 percent of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Educ - charter schools
and
Educ - vouchers



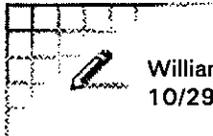
William R. Kincaid
10/29/97 07:36:34 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP, Michael Cohen/OPD/EOP
cc: Tanya E. Martin/OPD/EOP
bcc:
Subject: Re: House Vouchers/Charters

The problematic rule and these two bills are now expected to come up on the House floor tomorrow (Thursday); Andy Blocker has confirmed that Democratic leadership will be opposing the rule; the question is whether any moderate Republicans who support charter schools and don't want to mess up the Riggs-Roemer bill will vote against it as well. Jon Schnur is letting John Doerr's folks know about this, because they have a strong interest in charter schools, and is also getting the word out to some in the charter schools community, who probably wouldn't want to see the bill fouled up.]

William R. Kincaid



William R. Kincaid
10/29/97 12:31:59 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP, Michael Cohen/OPD/EOP
cc: Tanya E. Martin/OPD/EOP
Subject: House Vouchers/Charters

fyi -- As we had heard was a possibility, for House floor consideration, Goodling has requested a "self-executing" rule, under which the voucher bill (HELP) would come up first, then the charter schools bill, and then once both bills have passed the voucher bill would automatically be added to the charter bill before it goes over to the Senate.

'97 SEP 29 11:38

Education vouchers

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
STATEMENT ON SCHOOL VOUCHER VOTE
SEPTEMBER 30, 1997**

In the 21st century, our children must have the best education in the world. I am committed to making sure every eight-year old can read, every 12-year old can log on to the Internet, and every 18-year old can go to college. And we have made significant progress to improve and strengthen public education.

But as Congress continues to debate the Education Bill this fall, it's become very clear that there some who are waging a multi-front war against our public schools.

First, the Senate has passed an amendment that would virtually kill the Department of Education and abolish some of its most successful efforts to expand public school choice, to bring computers to every classroom, to create more safe and drug-free schools.

Second, the House of Representatives has voted to prevent America from setting the high national standards of academic excellence that we must have to ensure every child masters the basics.

I have vowed to veto both pieces of legislation. And I am pleased that 43 Democratic Senators have announced their intention to support high national standards and sustain my veto.

Third, in a vote to occur today, some in Congress would diminish our country's commitment to public education by siphoning badly-needed funds away from our public schools into a voucher program that would support private education for a limited number of students. Ninety percent of America's children attend public schools. Our public schools are already facing a host of challenges with very limited funds. And we must continue to support proven reform efforts -- making schools safer, getting parents more involved, raising standards and improving teaching.

Education has always been a public enterprise in America. Public schools are the cornerstone of American democracy. Throughout history, we have always recognized our common responsibility for preparing all our young for the challenges of the future and duties of citizenship. I call upon Congress to stand by our public schools, not walk away from them.

Support Existing Anti-Discrimination Laws: Oppose Cloture on S. 1156

September 29, 1997

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the National Women's Law Center (NWLC), and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), we urge you to oppose cloture on the District of Columbia Appropriations bill (S. 1156). We believe that the District of Columbia should not be a laboratory for exempting taxpayer-supported schools from federal civil rights laws.

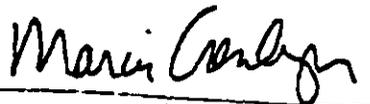
The District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1997, which is expected to be introduced by Senators Coats and Lieberman as an amendment during Senate floor consideration of S. 1156, erodes anti-discrimination laws (Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, and the Age Discrimination Act) and takes away from the children of D.C. the guarantee of equal educational opportunity that they deserve. The bill's anti-discrimination provision falls far short of the anti-discrimination requirements under federal law. Further, the bill expressly permits taxpayer dollars to support sex discrimination by funding single-sex programs, regardless of the justification for them and regardless of whether any programs are available to the excluded sex.

Attached is more detailed information on why we oppose cloture on the District of Columbia Appropriations bill. If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Zirkin, AAUW, at 202/785-7720, Debbie Brake, NWLC, at 202/588-5180, or Wade Henderson, LCCR, at 202/466-3311.

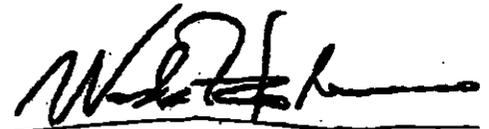
Sincerely,



Sandy Bernard
AAUW, President



Marcia Greenberger
NWLC, Co-President



Wade Henderson
LCCR, Executive Director

**OPPOSE CLOTURE ON S.1156:
SUPPORT EXISTING FEDERAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS**

The District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1997, which is expected to be introduced by Senators Coats and Lieberman as an amendment during Senate floor consideration of S.1156, erodes existing anti-discrimination laws (Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 and the Age Discrimination Act) and takes away from the children of D.C. the guarantee of equal educational opportunity that they deserve.

- **D.C. should not be a laboratory for exempting taxpayer-supported schools from federal civil rights laws.** Under current law, schools that receive federal funds in the form of federal aid to students must abide by federal laws prohibiting discrimination in federally-funded education programs.¹ These laws protect students, and others, from discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin and disability in federally-funded education programs. The Coats bill, however, rewrites the law to permit schools to receive taxpayer-funded vouchers unconditionally, without any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws. D.C. students attending taxpayer-supported schools should not have less protection from discrimination than students in all other parts of the country.
- **The bill's anti-discrimination provision falls far short of the anti-discrimination requirements under federal law and is not adequate.** In an apparent attempt to compensate for withholding federal civil rights protections from the federally-supported voucher program created in the bill, the bill includes a section prohibiting participating schools from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex. However, the bill's substitute anti-discrimination provision is far from adequate:
 - (1) The bill does not include disability as a prohibited basis for discrimination;²
 - (2) There is no indication that the types of discrimination that it does cover would be construed as broadly as the requirements of federal law, and

¹Grove City College v. Bell, 465 U.S. 555, 563-70 (1984). While Congress subsequently overturned other aspects of the Court's decision in Grove City restricting the scope of federal civil rights laws, it left intact the Court's ruling that a private college that did not otherwise receive federal aid had to comply with federal civil rights laws because it indirectly received such aid by enrolling students who paid their tuition with federal education grants.

²Although a separate section of the bill preserves the existing obligations of D.C. public schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, it does not address D.C. private schools, nor does it preserve the general prohibition of disability-based discrimination applicable to federally-funded programs under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(3) The bill affords no means for enforcing its non-discrimination provision other than by permitting a newly-created private corporation to revoke an institution's eligibility if it finds the institution violated the civil rights provision. By contrast, the federal anti-discrimination laws are enforced by the government agency that awarded the federal funds or by the courts, and persons harmed by discrimination are entitled to a complete remedy.

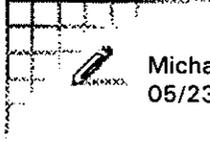
The bill expressly permits taxpayer dollars to support sex discrimination by funding single-sex programs, regardless of the justification for them and regardless of whether any programs are available to the excluded sex. The bill explicitly permits participating schools to be single-sex or to offer single-sex classes or activities, without any requirement that they offer any program for the excluded sex, much less an equal program. As history has shown, single-sex education has often left girls and women with the short end of the stick, and the bill provides no safeguards to keep history from repeating itself. Moreover, Title IX already provides adequate flexibility for appropriate single-sex programs.

For additional information, contact:

Deborah Brake
National Women's Law Center
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September 29, 1997



Michael Cohen
05/23/97 04:53:20 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP
cc: Laura Emmett/WHO/EOP
Subject: Weekly CORRECTION

Elena-- on the voucher amendment, Lott did not introduce this; Dominici did for Coverdale. See how much confusion is rampant on this?

I would stress in the weekly (1) that it happened; (2) that it was occasioned by confusion; it happened quickly, the amendment was so poorly drafted that it is unimplementable; (3) that it provides something of a symbolic victory but one that we can and will downplay because of the confusion.

Subject: Education amendment

The education amendment adopted in the Senate by a vote of 51-49 (Domenici voting for) was intended to allow the Labor Committee to fund school vouchers for children who are the victims of crime. It is basically not implementable although it does change budget resolution numbers. The amendment came in the form of a second degree to the Wellstone amendment (the Republicans wanted to avoid an up or down vote on Wellstone).

The text of the amendment states the intent as described above, and simply strikes Wellstone number changes and inserts an additional (not offset) \$2.5 billion in 2000 in budget authority for Function 400, it also adds an additional \$2.5 billion in budget aggregates. Outlays are not changed, the discretionary caps are not changed, nor is the Labor Committee reconciled the additional spending. Since the stated intent of the amendment is not binding, the only effect of this amendment is to increase Function 400 education spending (budget authority only) in the year 2000.

During the debate, there was a great deal of confusion about the amendment and many members (including possibly Senator Domenici) apparently thought it was a Sense of the Senate. The education community is concerned that some will represent this as a test vote on vouchers (the Senate has always filibustered vouchers in the past) but I'd chalk it up to confusion and play down the voucher piece of this.

In any event, there is common agreement internally that the amendment should be dropped in conference.



PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY ACTION FUND

Your Voice Against Intolerance

PUBLIC FUNDS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our schoolchildren are our nation's greatest resource and many Americans are searching for ways to make our public schools stronger so that we can ensure a quality education for *all* our children. For more than a decade, the Religious Right has touted vouchers as a way to improve education. But vouchers are not the answer.

- **Vouchers will not give our kids a better education.** Vouchers would drain much-needed funding from our neighborhood public schools while doing nothing to improve them. Most students will be left behind in deteriorating schools that are robbed of critical resources.
- **Vouchers provide a choice for private schools, not students.** Many students with vouchers would still be ineligible or unable to attend many private schools with long waiting lists and restrictive admission standards based on academic performance, religion, sex, disability and other factors.
- **Vouchers do not cover all private school costs.** The money that parents would receive under most proposed voucher programs would not fully pay for the cost of tuition or other private school expenses, such as band, travel, sports and other extracurricular activities. These expenses would be left for the parents to pay out of their own pockets. Many, if not most, low- and middle-income parents would be unable to meet these costs and their kids would be unable to participate.
- **Voucher proposals authorize the spending of large amounts of public money with little accountability to the taxpayers.** Most voucher proposals do not require participating schools to meet basic accreditation standards, to follow a set curriculum, or to employ specific standards for evaluating student progress. Billions of tax dollars could be spent for substandard education programs, while subsidizing parents whose children already attend private schools.
- **School voucher proposals will cost taxpayers money.** Although vouchers would shift government funds, they would not decrease government spending and in fact may increase costs because of several factors: the expense of transporting students to their new private schools, providing mandatory special education programs at private schools, and monitoring how public funds are being spent. In addition, a large amount of public funding would be spent subsidizing students who are already in private schools.
- **Voucher proposals would drive up local property taxes.** Local school boards and superintendents would be left with the task of running neighborhood schools with fewer resources. Taxes inevitably would need to be raised to cover such fixed costs as building maintenance, cafeterias, utilities and buses -- costs that will not go down just because there are fewer students attending the public schools.
- **Because they send public tax dollars to private religious schools, voucher proposals violate the separation of church and state.** The Constitution's prohibition of government endorsement of religion is clear and the courts have long held that public funds may not be used to advance religion. The Supreme Court struck down a New York voucher plan for that reason in 1973. Recently, a Wisconsin state judge ruled that the expansion of an existing voucher plan to include religious schools is unconstitutional.



PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY ACTION FUND

Your Voice Against Intolerance

The American Community Renewal Act

Representatives J.C. Watts (R-OK), James Talent (R-MO) and Floyd Flake (D-NY) recently introduced H.R.1031, the "American Community Renewal Act of 1997." This is a reintroduction of last year's H.R.3467, "Saving Our Children: The American Community Renewal Act of 1996," which was primarily sponsored by Representatives Watts and Talent.

This bill is a large demonstration proposal that would establish 100 "renewal communities" across the country, entitling these communities to additional government assistance while saddling them with unnecessary and unconstitutional programs. The Christian Coalition actively supports this legislation because it contains many of the priorities they highlight in their "Samaritan Project," including school voucher programs and taxpayer funding for sectarian organizations. Under the guise of trying to improve the plight of disadvantaged communities, conservative and Religious Right proponents are attempting to tear down the wall between church and state, destroy public education, delegitimize charitable organizations, and throw out years of civil rights protection laws.

The threat that this legislation will move this year is even more pressing because a companion bill, S. 432, has been introduced by Senators Spencer Abraham (R-MI) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT).

- **This Legislation Would Mandate the Establishment of Educational Voucher Programs**
In order for a community to receive renewal funds under this legislation, it must agree to implement a voucher program for elementary and secondary students. This voucher program would permit private schools, including religious schools, to receive taxpayer dollars in the form of "scholarships" for a small number of selected low-income children.
- **The Mandated Educational Voucher Program Would Cost One Billion Dollars**
No funding source has been identified for this massive program and there is no indication of whether this money would come from an increase in taxes or if it would be siphoned off the support for public education that is available to all children. In addition, this appropriation request is for only five of the seven year life of this legislation and more money would need to be appropriated to pay for the remaining two years.
- **This Bill Would Encourage Taxpayer Funded Discrimination**
Religious schools receiving this public funding could discriminate on any basis except race, including religion and gender, in admission and hiring policies. Furthermore, the renewal communities themselves would be able to discriminate on any basis except race and religion in selecting which students will receive a school voucher. Finally, religious organizations receiving taxpayer dollars under this legislation to provide drug and alcohol treatment services would be permitted to discriminate against their employees on the basis of religion.

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- **The Bill Would Gut the Power of Elected Local School Boards**
 State and local governments would be forbidden from exercising direction, control, or supervision over taxpayer-supported private schools.
- **Proselytizing in Federally Funded Drug Treatment Programs is Sanctioned**
 Under this legislation, taxpayer dollars could now go directly to religious organization for the purpose of drug treatment as opposed to religious-affiliated charities that historically have provided this treatment. These religious organizations would be entitled to require the clients of their drug treatment programs to take part in religious services and abide by the tenets of the faith in order to receive services.
- **The Success/Safety of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Programs Would Be Compromised**
 This legislation would allow religious organizations, that provide drug and alcohol treatment through this program, to ask the Secretary of HUD (who will institute this program) to waive any formal education requirements imposed by State or local governments on drug treatment counselors or other drug treatment program employees.
- **Free Speech by Non-Profit Organizations is Strongly Discouraged**
 This bill establishes a tax credit for charitable donations made to non-profit organizations who directly aid the poor. However, this tax credit would not apply to donations made to any organization that engages in any type of political activity such as lobbying, voter registration, public policy advocacy, public policy research, or litigation on behalf of its clients. Such punitive restrictions would force charities to trade off their First Amendment rights in order for their donors to qualify for the new tax credit.
- **The Needs of Impoverished Clients Would Not be Fully Met**
 Under this legislation, non-profit organizations would be required to keep detailed records on the poverty levels of their clients in order for donors to receive the new tax credit. The time and energy spent on managing the resulting paperwork glut would prevent many organizations from fully meeting the needs of their impoverished clients. Furthermore, large numbers of poor people would be unable to provide all of the required proof of poverty and would therefore give up on trying to access the services they so desperately need.



PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY ACTION FUND

Your Voice Against Intolerance

The Safe And Affordable Schools Act

Senate Republican leadership designated the "Safe and Affordable Schools Act of 1997" (S.1) as the first Senate bill of the 105th Congress. This legislation, introduced by Senator Paul Coverdell (R-GA), features three school voucher programs to be paid for with taxpayer dollars. Capitalizing on problems in our inner cities and some public schools, conservatives are using this large education bill to advance their goal of taxpayer funding of private schools and the weakening of our public education system. Instead of seeking solutions that would help all of our children, this bill would assist only a few public and private school students. Most students would be left behind in public schools robbed of critical resources.

- **The Proposed Voucher Programs Will Cost Taxpayers Millions of Dollars.**

This legislation authorizes the creation of three separate school voucher programs. In Title I of the bill, a five-year voucher demonstration program targets low-income children attending "unsafe" schools in twenty to thirty, mostly urban, project areas. This voucher program would cost taxpayers \$50 million in the first year alone, with additional, unspecified amounts of money needed to pay for the remaining four years of the program.

- **Public Schools and Public School Students Would Be Harmed By This Legislation.**

No funding source has been identified for the \$50 million voucher demonstration project and there is no indication of whether this money would come from an increase in taxes or if it would be siphoned off the support for public education presently available to all children. Furthermore, the second voucher program established in Title I of this bill would redirect existing public education funding-- money to be used to improve basic educational programs in public schools-- to pay for a voucher program that would include private and religious schools. Finally, Title II of this bill authorizes state and local governments to use money currently earmarked for teacher training and technical improvements to public schools in a "flexible" manner to create school voucher programs.

- **This Bill Would Subsidize Private Education.**

Under this legislation, children currently attending and paying for private schools would be eligible for vouchers and could therefore become the primary beneficiaries of these voucher programs, instead of the "intended targets" of the bill: the children attending so-called "unsafe" public schools. Furthermore, many public school students would be barred from attending a private school because of lack of space or because they could not meet the restrictive admission standards-- including those based on academic performance, religion, sex, and disability-- that private schools use in determining which students to admit to their schools.

- **This Legislation Encourages Taxpayer-Funded Discrimination.**

Private schools, including sectarian schools, receiving taxpayer dollars under these voucher programs could discriminate on the basis of gender, religion, disability, and age in their admission and hiring practices.

- **This Legislation Violates The Constitutional Separation Between Church And State.**

Two of these proposed school voucher programs specifically seek the participation of private, religious schools. The Constitution's prohibition of government endorsement of religion is clear and the courts have long held that public funds may not be used to advance religion, whether directly or indirectly.

3/97



PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY

Your Voice Against Intolerance

The Religious Right's Record on Issues of Concern to African Americans and the Poor

On January 30 1997, the Christian Coalition, the flagship organization of the Religious Right political movement, launched its 1997 legislative agenda to great public fanfare. Ralph Reed, the group's executive director, called the "Samaritan Project a "bold and compassionate agenda to combat poverty and restore hope." Reed portrayed the agenda as a significant break with the past – a platform aimed at serving the needs of the poor and the interests of the minority community.

In fact, at its heart are the same proposals – although repackaged – that the group has been promoting for years. Instead of calling for school vouchers, for example, the new project promotes "hope and opportunity scholarships." Similarly, a closer look at the initiative's call for legislation to create strong families reveals agenda items quite familiar to Christian Coalition watchers: restrictions on divorce and federal funding for fear-based sexuality education.

In addition, the Christian Coalition continues to promote a constitutional amendment to return state-sponsored prayer to public school classrooms, legislation to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts and end federal support for legal services for the poor, and a bill that would do great harm to child-abuse prevention efforts in the name of "parental rights."

The stark truth is that the Christian Coalition has cynically repackaged its legislative agenda in an attempt to attract support from the very communities that its agenda would hurt. That cynicism is embodied by the group's executive director, Ralph Reed, who has drawn much public attention by apologizing for past misdeeds in these issue areas of his political cohorts. Yet, he has never acknowledged that any past position of the Christian Coalition was misguided, and, indeed, the group's current agenda renews many of those positions. Truth to tell, while Ralph Reed is apologizing for the past, he might do well to apologize for the present as well.

The pages that follow sketch out in short form the true record of the Christian Coalition, its leaders and its allies on issues of particular concern to minority Americans and the poor. An examination of this record leaves little doubt that the group's recent



claim to have taken the concerns of these communities to heart deserves healthy skepticism.

Part One: The Christian Coalition

Over the last few years, the Christian Coalition has made a concerted effort to win the support of African Americans. The reason for that effort is plainly political. The leaders of the group have made clear that they regard themselves as a key constituency of the Republican party – the group has accepted contributions from the party, and claimed credit for having taken working control of as many as 30 state Republican party central committees. By contrast, African Americans have long given the overwhelming majority of their votes to Democratic candidates. In 1996, exit polls suggest that as many as 85 percent of African American votes went to Bill Clinton, for example. What the Christian Coalition hopes to accomplish is nothing more complicated than lowering the margin by which Democrats beat Republicans within this key constituency. In the year 2000, for example, if the Republican nominee loses within the African American community by a three to one margin, he or she will still have gained approximately one percent of the popular vote by comparison to Bob Dole. Shaving the margin of defeat even more would have even bolder results.

For the Christian Coalition, however, attracting those votes for their chosen Republican candidates is no simple feat. It requires obscuring a very plain record on issues of particular concern to that community. Still, the group has set its sights on doing just that, launching a media campaign portraying itself as a friend of the African American community, and a savior to the poor. At a January press conference announcing its agenda, Reed was flanked by a number of minority clergy, one of whom hailed Reed as a leader of the African American community. Said Rev. Lawrence Haygood of Tuskegee, Alabama,

“We in the black community were looking for a leader to come from the black community. But that leader didn’t appear. He appeared in a white form in the image of Ralph Reed.”

If Reed is indeed a leader of the community, he is a leader whose organization and whose boss – televangelist Pat Robertson, founder and chairman of the Christian Coalition – have routinely worked against the interests of the community.

Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity

- Christian Coalition Chairman, Pat Robertson is a vociferous critic of affirmative action programs. Said Robertson in 1996: “There are groups in our society who are extremely able. The Chinese, for example, Asian-Americans, they’re extremely able

and they always score high and are disproportionately represented in the high levels. Same thing generally with the Jewish people. They are very high achievers. They don't like quotas because it will discriminate against them. If you say, 'Well, you can only have five Chinese and two Jews, and so forth, and you've got to have fifteen Hispanics, etc.' Then all of sudden those people are denied their opportunities. And they are very intelligent and very vocal in society, and this is one of the reasons you're seeing these decisions, I think. It's unfair to these achieving groups, if you will, to deny them opportunities merely because they are of the wrong ethnic group. They consider it un-American.... I hate it. The whole thing is wrong. Give opportunity for everybody to achieve. Special privileges for people on the basis of race or sex, I don't think so."

- Robertson has opposed civil rights legislation throughout his career, most recently including the 1988 Civil Rights Restoration Act and the 1991 Civil Rights Act. Robertson called the Civil Rights Act of 1985 "one of the most frightening pieces of legislation that has been brought up." On the Civil Rights Act of 1991, Robertson said, "We don't need another civil rights bill. We just don't need another one. The country is moving beautifully toward racial equality and opportunity."
- Robertson has been an outspoken critic of several prominent African American appointees of the Clinton Administration -- Dr. Henry Foster (for whose defeat the Christian Coalition claimed credit), Lani Guinier (labeled a "quota queen"), Dr. Joycelyn Elders and Deval Patrick.
- Robertson even was an apologist for Apartheid in South Africa, and challenged the wisdom of ending it.

"I've been to South Africa," he said. "I know we don't like Apartheid, but the blacks in South Africa, in Soweto, don't have it all that bad." Elsewhere he said, "Again, I think 'one man one vote,' just unrestricted democracy, would not be wise. There needs to be some kind of protection for the minority which the white people represent now, a minority, and they need and have a right to demand a protection of their rights."

- The Rev. Billy McCormack, one of the early directors of the Christian Coalition and the head of the Louisiana Christian Coalition, was a supporter of former Klansman David Duke. During the late 1980s, McCormack was instrumental in blocking efforts by moderates in the Louisiana GOP to denounce Duke and his racist activities.
- The Christian Coalition gave their annual "Friend of the Family" award to Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) in 1993. Senator Helms is a long-time opponent of civil rights, led the opposition to the drive to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national holiday, and touched off an enormous firestorm for his race-baiting advertising campaign in the 1990 Senate campaign against Harvey Gantt.

Social Programs

The Christian Coalition has poured money and other resources into efforts to oppose a broad range of policies and programs serving America's poor.

- The Christian Coalition committed to spend \$1 million to promote Rep. Newt Gingrich's Contract With America. That "contract" called for cuts in Aid to Families with Dependent Children; for denying welfare benefits to children born to single mothers; and for reducing federal food assistance through the Food Stamp program, the National School Lunch Act and the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC).
- The following year, the Christian Coalition unveiled its own "Contract With the American Family," which included abolishing the Department of Education, promoting vouchers for private schools, offering a \$500 per child tax credit to wealthy families, funding private/religious charities and abolishing the Legal Services Corporation. LSC funds representation of poor families facing eviction, disabled people seeking disability payments, and poor families and children in adoption and child custody cases. Reed's stated attack on LSC is that it represents people in divorce cases, but in the past, Robertson has assailed the LSC because he says it has been too eager to file class action suits on behalf of the poor.
- The Christian Coalition poured resources into supporting the GOP's 1996 budget, which called for cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, cuts in aid to severely disabled children in the Supplemental Security Income program and cuts to the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- The Christian Coalition called for the dismantling of the federal welfare system and shifting responsibility for the poor to charities and religious groups. Said Pat Robertson: "It really isn't compassionate to take somebody's money and give it to somebody else. That's not compassionate. The Democrats say, 'we're compassionate.' That isn't compassion... And I don't think there's anything in the Constitution that says the government owes anybody welfare or a job or anything. The government does not owe grants of money to any group in our society."
- While Ralph Reed, in his new book, *Active Faith*, bemoans the "demonization of women who are pregnant out of wedlock," Pat Robertson says, "These girls are not stupid. If you want to pay them five hundred, six hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred dollars a month, or whatever it is, to have a baby, they'll have babies. And if they'll stop paying them, they'll stop having babies. It's that simple. It's not heartless, it's not cruel, it's an intelligent use of money."

- The Christian Coalition has opposed various education programs it calls ‘anti-family.’ Pat Robertson expressed opposition to Head Start, saying it was unnecessary, because, “if you’re smart, you’ll catch up anyway.” Ralph Reed once called the abolition of the Department of Education his number one legislative priority. Among the programs the Christian Coalition would sacrifice by dismantling the Education Department are Title I funding for poor school districts and Parental Literacy programs to help parents play a role in their children’s education.
- Ralph Reed has called education “the No. 1 social issue” of the 1990s, and wants to convert large chunks of the \$33 billion in federal education spending to vouchers to finance private or parochial school tuition, an approach experts believe would badly harm the funding base for public schools.

In Their Own Words and By Their Own Deeds

One common tactic for the Christian Coalition and its leaders is to exploit the images and language of the civil rights movement for their own political purposes. For example, while Ralph Reed has never worked to support a single civil rights measure, he laces his speeches and writings with quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And Pat Robertson is quick to claim common cause with African Americans, but only when it serves some issue agenda of his own.

- While blasting gays and lesbians for drawing parallels between their struggle and the civil rights movement, Robertson frequently compares the social status of Christians today to that of African Americans in the ‘50s and ‘60s. “Do you remember the Civil Rights movement? he asks. “They let black people on board the bus, but they had to go and sit at the back of the bus. When a black person tried to move to the front of the bus, then they put him in jail. Well, that’s what is happening now; Christians can go in a little tiny corner.”
- Though the Christian Coalition has earned justifiable praise for raising money for burned-out African American churches, the group’s chairman, Pat Robertson, has voiced doubts about whether racism was at work in the attacks. Said Robertson: “I think it’s not black/white, it’s anti-religious. I think some of this is Satan worshippers. They found that girl who was a Satan worshipper, they think she may have been responsible for some. I know they’ve had some evidence of KKK activity, but I just don’t think this is black/white. I think it’s simply far deeper.”
- When an African American high school principal was suspended for helping institute morning loudspeakers prayers in violation of the Constitution and in disregard of specific instructions from his superior, Robertson suggested the suspension was an act of racism. “This is a Black principal. And in that school, there are many people who

are racial minorities and to think that the government would come in and tell that man that he can't let those students pray. It's outrageous."

- The group also was caught during the 1996 election campaign distributing a sample voters guide that was described as racist by the president of the Texas branch of the NAACP. The guide used an African American man to represent candidates opposing Christian Coalition positions while a white man was depicted in favor of Coalition positions. The sample guides were widely circulated in Texas in an effort to get churches to distribute Coalition voters guides before the election last November. The guide depicted the fictitious African American candidate as opposing "Federal Tax Relief for Families" and "Voluntary Prayer in Public Schools" and supporting "Taxpayer-Funding of Obscene Art." Facing a firestorm of protest, the Christian Coalition subsequently apologized, calling it "an honest mistake" that happened because of a bad copy received by a fax machine.

Part Two: The Rest of the Religious Right Political Movement

The organizations and leaders with which the Christian Coalition has made common cause over the years are no more sympathetic to issues of particular concern to African Americans and the poor. The ultimately unsuccessful effort to sustain President Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 was a rallying point for the movement's major players.

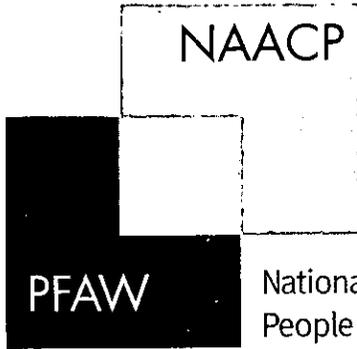
- Jerry Falwell, the grandfather of the Religious Right political movement, slammed the bill and urged followers to oppose the bill on the grounds that it would "force churches to hire practicing, active homosexuals with AIDS as youth pastors," a claim that has proved to be utterly false.
- Focus on the Family, the richest of the Religious Right organizations with a budget in excess of \$100 million, devoted considerable broadcast time, through its radio network of 1,600 stations to the cause of defeating the bill. The group's leader, James Dobson, urged listeners to call their senators and demand that they vote against the bill, a call that resulted in a flood of calls to the Capitol switchboard – so many that the switchboard was very nearly shut down.
- Litigation groups such as the Landmark Legal Foundation and Clint Bolick's Institute for Justice, have eagerly sought out potential court challenges in lower-income urban communities and loudly claim the mantle of supporters of education for the disadvantaged. In the past, Clint Bolick's Institute for Justice was better known for his vehement animosity towards virtually every proposed civil rights bill. He even opposed those bills supported by Presidents Nixon and Bush. For example, he branded the 1991 Civil Rights Act as a "quota" bill, even after it was supported by President Bush and 90 percent of the Congress. Bolick is now one of the leaders of

anti-affirmative action litigation work defending California's Proposition 209 in court.

- More recently, Bolick has embarked on a crusade to defeat executive branch nominees including President Clinton's candidates for the head of the Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department. From Lani Guinier, for whom he coined the phrase, "quota queen" to Deval Patrick, the former head of the Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department, characterized by Bolick as a "stealth Guinier," almost every name floated has been labeled as a quota supporter by Mr. Bolick whether their positions warrant such a description or not. Bolick also called Deval Patrick's work with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund "radical" and "outside the mainstream of civil rights consensus." Patrick has worked as a litigator with NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and has litigated civil rights cases concerning voting rights, criminal justice and housing discrimination.
- Jerry Falwell, in the final years of Apartheid in South Africa, and during the height of the divestiture movement in America, advocated the purchase of South African Kruggerands in his Moral Majority newsletter. Falwell also accused the African National Congress of "creating violence and bloodshed among the blacks of the country."
- A broad range of Religious Right organizations have taken to promoting their school voucher programs as a program designed to benefit minority Americans and the poor. In fact, the effort began in the form of "tuition tax credits" – a proposal that would have provided the Religious Right's largely white middle class, base of supporters a tax credit for private school tuition. Years later, a proposal that would have largely the same impact is being sold as motivated by concerns about the poor. Indeed, Religious Right leaders have directly attributed their failures in past voucher schemes to their failure "to do enough in cultivating minority support."
- A key supporter of vouchers has been the Bradley Foundation, a Milwaukee based right-wing foundation that has pumped millions of dollars into the political battle for vouchers. They have marketed voucher programs as a "lifeboat" to low-income students in Milwaukee and have actively pursued the support of the city's African-American community. Another of their grantees produced a book that more honestly portrays the right wing agenda on civil rights. Bradley provided a \$1 million grant to author Charles Murray to write the infamous book *The Bell Curve*. The book's argument that intelligence has a hereditary basis in race has been widely refuted. Even after the firestorm around the book, Bradley continued to fund Murray's work, providing a \$100,000 grant to support his work at the American Enterprise Institute.

Given the way that the Religious Right is actively recruiting support in minority communities and how it is setting itself up as the true champion of people of color, lower income or people of minority religions, it's hard to remember that some of these are the same groups that have railed against what they called "reverse discrimination," quotas and "welfare queens." Only two years ago, movement hero Pat Buchanan, harangued against the "injustices" Americans must bear in the name of multiculturalism. Buchanan said, "...instead of a tired Rosa Parks being denied a seat in the front of the bus on her way home from work, it is an earnest white man, with a teaching credential, being denied a job at the local high school."

To the cheers of the rank and file of the Christian Coalition Road, gathered at the group's 1993 "Road to Victory" Conference, Buchanan called multiculturalism "an across-the-board assault on our Anglo-American heritage." Many African American, Hispanic and Asian Americans may find it difficult to equate Robertson's invitation and embrace of speakers like Pat Buchanan with his organization's claims that they want to "embrace the full racial diversity of America."



PARTNERS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

National Association For the Advancement of Colored People &
People For the American Way

THEIR FUTURE IS IN

OUR HANDS



Together the NAACP and People
For the American Way are
proclaiming that all children
in America need free and open
access to education.

Our Partnership for Public
Education rejects the call for
laws that would damage
further our public schools and
divert tax dollars to private and
religious academies. We declare the
simple truth: We can and will reclaim
our public schools.

Join us as we tell you how.

A LETTER FROM NAACP PRESIDENT KWEISI MFUME



As the richest and most powerful nation on earth, we at the NAACP believe that no child should be left behind. America's children deserve the best education we can provide them.

In 1997, we find ourselves facing an issue which is in some ways the old familiar fight for fairness, but we must instead regard as a new fight demanding our vigorous attention. The attacks of the right on our children's future have solidified around a concept of exclusion and selective opportunity called "vouchers."

As I've said before, the extreme ultraconservative policies of the far right wing in our nation are Draconian, punitive and backward. They are policies that punish the elderly, restrict the poor and deny opportunity to our children. Those policies which threaten our American ideals must be countered with effective and realistic responses that reflect our need as a society for inclusion and tolerance.

Vouchers is one of these threats.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is proud to join with People For the American Way, taking a stand against this terrible threat. No other scheme poses a greater danger to the idea that no child should be left behind.

Voucher proposals take many forms, and some are designed to deliberately obscure the basic realities that will result over time. The best students will get skimmed off—those that pri-

vate schools find desirable for their own reasons. Since families will have to make up additional costs, those in the upper- and middle-income brackets will be helped the most—as long as their kids don't have personal, behavioral or educational challenges that cause the private school to pass them by. The surest losers are the poorest children with the most urgent need for a good school system. Many of them would not be able to afford the extra tuition, transportation and related costs of using a voucher. Many of those who could afford such costs would never be accepted to selective private schools anyway.

Skin color, religion, economic class, language group, need for remedial work—all these things would be barriers to acceptance and success in a system designed around the choices of the private schools, not the choices of the parents and students.

We have stood in, slept in, studied in and prayed in. We've waged our struggle nonviolently in the spirit of love; appealed to the fundamental morality of the nation and of the nation's conscious. The result has been bloodied heads and broken limbs, burned churches and bombed homes, assassinated leaders and murdered followers, broken spirits and crippled hopes.

But we are a people of hope and determination. We have opportunity in concept beyond what we've known before; but history has taught us that freedom is a constant struggle. We are not surprised to discover that the fight

must continue to make opportunity and equality real for all our children.

Education must be a fundamental guarantee for each child, and for our nation's precious democracy. The struggle for educational opportunity for all our children remains at risk. Regrettably, the opposition is gathering strength. They are packaging the threat to that opportunity attractively, and spending millions to make it policy. Once again, we are being called upon to stand up on behalf of our children and to fight back. We are determined to turn back the efforts of the right to gain additional political power and economic gain for their private interests using votes and tax dollars which belong to all our children.

Our partnership with People For the American Way reflects our belief that progress comes when we *transcend our differences and affirm one of the most important things that unites us as a people: our love for our children. As we prepare to cross over into a new millenium of hope and challenge, we at the NAACP believe that no child should be left behind.*

Kweisi Mfume
President and CEO
NAACP



A LETTER FROM PFAW PRESIDENT CAROLE SHIELDS

Every child counts.

I can't think about education in America without hearing those words.

Every child counts.

I hear those words when I read that test scores are up or down, or that a teacher is buying pencils or books out of her own pocket. I hear them when there's violence on a playground, or free years of college earned at a science fair.

Every child counts.

Those words are the ideal on which America's public schools were built. And for that simple reason, they *must* form the basis for our education policy. But just as some schools are damp from leaky roofs, so too is this ideal under attack. It's an attack called "vouchers."

People For the American Way is proud to join with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, taking a stand against this terrible threat. Vouchers. No other plot poses a greater danger to the idea that *every child counts*.

There are those who claim that vouchers—publicly funded scholarships to private or religious schools—are an escape route from public schools in crisis. That's simply not so. But even if it were, I would reject vouchers because every mother's instinct inside me

says they're a mean-spirited hoax. Think about it: not only aren't there enough private school desks to accommodate *all the children*, but there is no chance the schools would invite them all in.

Here's what I think vouchers are really about. They are about taking resources from our public schools and they are about politics—a naked grab for money by groups like the Christian Coalition, a group that uses the word "Christian," but doesn't represent the gospel my preacher father taught me. After years of opposing civil rights legislation, the religious right has recently appeared on the doorstep of African Americans, promising vouchers in return for a new block of votes. They say vouchers are for poor children, but they hide the fine print.

In the few places where vouchers exist, they pay only part of the tuition bills. Families pay the rest. Nor do they cover transportation, field trips or books. And most of all, they don't guarantee that every child will get past the admissions office. Remember? Vouchers are for private schools, and private schools are selective. Only public schools take *all the children*.

But if vouchers aren't the answer, what is?

At People For the American Way, we're finding better answers. We're forming partnerships, sharing solutions, setting rules that reforms must meet. For instance:

- *Results count:* schools must prepare kids to think for themselves, get and hold good jobs, be ready to tackle college.

- *Fairness counts:* new policies must benefit every student, not just a chosen few.

- *The Constitution counts:* the protection that our government may not sponsor churches (and by extension, their schools) must not, and need not, be compromised.

- *Accountability counts:* tax dollars must not go to any school without public accountability.

- *Every child counts:* changes must include a commitment to all kids, including those who are learning disabled, troubled, or poor performers, and those with no parents to act as advocates.

I like this list because it reminds me that there are two enemies of public schools we must overcome. The first enemy is our own lack of commitment—by all of us who allowed schools to decline and decay. The second enemy is the political movement called the Religious Right. The Christian Coalition and its allies believe that if they tell us our public school ship is sinking, we will each try to save our own children and turn our backs on the rest.

I believe we don't have to make that choice, because I believe the solutions can be found. Join us to make education work—not for a chosen few, but for *all our children*. Because *every child counts*.

Carole Shields

Carole Shields
President
People For the American Way

'MANY WILL CHOOSE AND FEW WILL BE CALLED'

Religious Right forces are touting vouchers as the medicine for sick schools. Problem is, this medicine could kill the patient.

Are vouchers the remedy public schools need, or are they a cruel hoax?

Many Americans are concerned about public education and are looking for ways to make our schools stronger. A number of approaches have been advanced, but school vouchers—the most perennially and politically charged idea—have gotten more attention than all other proposals. Under a voucher plan, taxpayers' dollars would leave the public school budget and go instead to sectarian and other private schools.

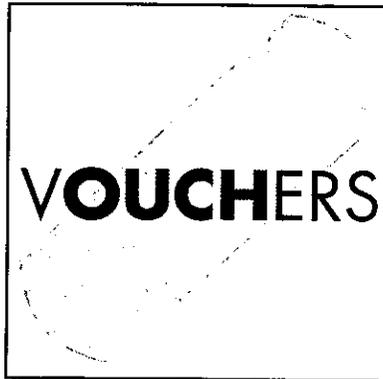
Although the name has changed over the years from tuition tax credits to vouchers to the 1997 version, "education opportunity scholarships," what is offered is always the same: a transfer of tax dollars and some children to private schools—schools that select their students. In addition, voters, even parents, have no voice in setting the admissions or education policies that govern these schools.

Promoted to poor families among others under the banner of "choice," the "educational opportunity scholarships" proposed by the Christian Coalition would do great harm to minority and disadvantaged inner-city school students.

Take Milwaukee, which adopted an experimental voucher program in 1990 and has more experience with vouchers than any other city in the nation (see related story, page 5). A report by the Carnegie Foundation found that since the program began, test scores among voucher students were unchanged, attrition rates have skyrocketed and accountability is missing.

"While most students and parents participating in the program say they are happy with their chosen schools, an astonishing 40 percent of students who made the switch to private schools did not return the next year," the Carnegie Foundation concluded. "Further, the standard test scores of participating students have shown little or no improvement in reading and math and remain well below average in both."

Elsewhere, experts have raised another vexing question: will enough slots exist for all of the "voucher" students to attend the private school of their choice? Already, many of these schools have long waiting lists. When a task force in Connecticut debated school vouchers, one education expert addressed the space problem. "Many will choose and few will be called," Jerome Brown, who was appointed to the panel by Connecticut's governor, told *The New York Times*.



Willis D. Hamley, dean of the college of education at the University of Maryland, suggests that vouchers will divide us in more ways than we might care to imagine. "The widespread use of vouchers for private school tuition will increase the costs of education for taxpayers, undermine support for public schools, and further separate children by class, race and beliefs," Hamley wrote in a column published in the March 17, 1996 *Baltimore Sun*.

While education experts have raised public policy objections to school vouchers, prominent jurists have objected to vouchers on constitutional grounds. Judge Paul B. Higginbotham ruled that the inclusion of religious schools in Wisconsin's voucher program violated the state constitution's provisions against taxpayer support of sectarian institutions.

"Millions of dollars would be directed to religious institutions that are pervasively sectarian with a clear mission to indoctrinate Wisconsin students with their religious beliefs," Judge Higginbotham wrote.

The most important question of all is what vouchers will do to improve public education. Faced with crumbling schools and dwindling resources, including teachers who are underpaid, who in their right mind would suggest cutting schools' budgets even more? Yet that is the only way to fund private school vouchers. The answer seems clear—we cannot afford to make such cuts. Our energy and funds go to find solutions to school problems for the benefit of all our children.

WISCONSIN VOUCHER PROGRAM IN DISARRAY

Conservatives—indeed, politicians of all stripes—like to talk about local control. Elected school boards, some might argue, represent the truest form of local control in our nation, because elected board members are directly accountable to parents and other voters.

But when conservatives in Wisconsin pushed through a first-of-its-kind voucher program in 1990, local control wasn't what they achieved. Instead, it was chaos.

In Milwaukee, two of the 17 schools initially participating in a voucher program were closed in 1996 after directors were accused of inventing phantom "voucher students" to get more public funding. A judge issued a warrant for the arrest of the director of the private Exito Education Center after he was charged with felony fraud—falsifying attendance records

that resulted in the school being paid \$42,000 under the Wisconsin School Choice Program. And the director of the private Milwaukee Preparatory School was charged with encouraging parents of nonvoucher students to falsify information so they would qualify for reimbursement under the program.

A report on the Milwaukee experiment prepared by the Carnegie Foundation found that the voucher program has not resulted in higher test scores and has lessened schools' accountability to parents.

So not only were the Milwaukee schools overall left no better or stronger because of the Wisconsin School Choice Program, but a number of the private schools that were to have benefited from the program were mismanaged into chaos, with no opportunity for parents to hold the schools accountable for their children's education.

Of course, accountability and local control are but two of the issues that cause concern among voucher opponents. Another is the potential for racial resegregation. In challenging the constitutionality of the Wisconsin voucher plan, the Milwaukee chapter of the NAACP has argued that it "funds the establishment, maintenance and expansion of virtually one-race schools, both black and white, and furthers the segregation of Milwaukee public schools in violation of both the U.S. and Wisconsin constitutions."

A Wisconsin circuit judge has ruled that an attempted expansion of the plan violates the state constitution, and appeals are pending.

Given all that has happened in Milwaukee, parents can be forgiven for wondering why state legislators imposed this system on their local schools.

PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY'S COMMITMENT TO CIVIL RIGHTS

People For the American Way and the People For the American Way Action Fund have a consistent and uniform commitment to civil rights, dating back to 1980, when PFAW was founded by Norman Lear and other civic and religious leaders. The Action Fund's civil rights initiatives include working for the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990, and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988. The Action Fund has defended affirmative action, fought for more diversity on the bench, and lobbied against both the Clarence Thomas and Robert Bork nominations. People For the American Way also has implemented STAR, Students Talk About Race, a program that has reached some

14,000 middle and high school students in California alone. Finally, People For the American Way continues to operate First Vote, the most ambitious and successful voter registration program of high school seniors ever conducted. To date, First Vote has registered more than 400,000 high school seniors in some 3,500 mostly urban schools across the country.

Look at the Christian Coalition's record and

look at People For the American Way's record. And then decide: Who speaks for you?

**Rev. Tim McDonald's Letter
To Clergy, Next Page**

By Rev. Timothy McDonald, PFAW Board Member, First Iconium Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY FELLOW AFRICAN AMERICAN CLERGY

Earlier this year, in a hotel conference room in Washington, the executive director of the Christian Coalition announced what he immodestly called a "bold" new plan to promote racial harmony and provide for America's poor. A key part of that agenda, a so-called "Congress on Racial Reconciliation," was called for Baltimore in May, 1997. As a clergyman who has had experience with the Christian Coalition in my home town of Atlanta, I would say that their new plan is bold in only one sense: political. I can think of no better word to describe such a breathtakingly deceptive media strategy. But when it comes to substance—to policy, to real outreach, and even to motives—I must confess to a skepticism borne of experience.

My reasons for doubting the Christian Coalition's sincerity are three. First, history. For years, the Christian Coalition has been at the forefront of the Religious Right political movement. They've promoted a hard-line, right wing agenda that has been frankly at odds with the interests of African Americans, and hostile to the interests of the poor. In the last several years, the Christian Coalition has: opposed every civil rights bill introduced since 1991; supported efforts to slash welfare; supported cuts in Medicaid; worked to undercut Head Start; called for the abolition of the Department of Education; campaigned to end federal family planning assistance; backed efforts to get rid of real sex education programs; and worked to drain funds from already strapped public schools. All told, this

group brings a track record that makes me doubt their leaders' sincerity.

My second reason to doubt the Christian Coalition's intentions is their current political agenda. Take a look at the fine print. The group's leaders want to abolish federal support for legal services for the poor, denying millions of poor and minority Americans their access to the courthouse, and they're renewing their call for a diversion of public school funds to private schools. Also, after working last year to gut welfare, the Christian Coalition now wants to use a tax credit scheme to funnel money to select nonprofit organizations and churches, so that we can distribute funds to poor people, and try to convert them along the way.

The third reason I doubt the Christian Coalition is because I've seen these folks in action here in Atlanta. A few years ago, the group's political organizers began circulating in the city's housing projects recruiting African American welfare mothers to testify before the Georgia legislature in support of their school vouchers proposal. They promised these women that vouchers would mean a quality education for their children, in the north end of Atlanta, home to the white upper middle class. But what they never told them was that the voucher they were proposing was too small to ever pay for a private school education. And they didn't mention that the only "choice" to be made in this so-called program of school choice, was the one that the schools would make in deciding which students to take.



So here's the point: the Christian Coalition is using the language of racial reconciliation for a much more partisan political purpose. The group's white leaders have their eyes cynically set on last November's exit polls, which showed that 85 percent of African Americans gave their vote to Bill Clinton. That's as powerful a force as any in the American electorate, and the Christian Coalition wants to peel some of those votes away for their candidates and their extremist policies.

So they talk about racial reconciliation. And they describe their voucher plan as an effort to "reform," not gut, the public schools. And they say they want to get rid of legal services for the poor because it "promotes divorce." And they defend slashing welfare by saying they're doing it to help the poor. And so on.

Well I say to them, "shame on you, Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed," and "shame on the Christian Coalition." Race relations are too strained, and tensions are too high to be playing politics. Instead of seeking to exploit these issues, Pat Robertson and his organization ought to try to help us strengthen our public schools, not abandon them.

So my fellow clergy, I urge, I plead with you, when the Christian Coalition comes to sell their program, don't buy it.

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

VOUCHER ONSLAUGHT

Passage of voucher legislation would bring a windfall to Christian schools supported by the Religious Right—and to other private schools as well. That could be why, across the nation, the Religious Right political movement has mounted a full-court press for school vouchers—in inner-city school districts as well as affluent, suburban districts. Voucher legislation has either been filed or is anticipated in as many as 25 states. Voucher proposals are pending in Congress, and the Christian Coalition has pledged to make vouchers one of its top priorities for the 105th Congress. The most immediate threat is a proposal in the Senate which includes \$50 million for a voucher demonstration project. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott made clear his priorities by designating this piece of legislation "S1," the first bill of the 105th Congress.

Voucher proposals **ARE ADVANCING** in state legislatures **ACROSS THE NATION.**

**Proposals
either have
been filed or
are anticipated
in 25 states:**

Arizona	New York
California	Ohio
Colorado*	Oregon
Connecticut	Pennsylvania
Florida	South Carolina
Georgia	South Dakota
Idaho	Tennessee
Illinois	Texas
Indiana	Vermont
Kansas	Virginia
Maryland	Washington
Michigan	
Montana	
New Jersey	

*Defeated

IF YOU CARE ABOUT THESE ISSUES,
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WHAT WORKS?

If vouchers aren't the answer to the problems plaguing public education, what is? It's an important question, and the truth is that the answer isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Educators, parents, policymakers and others have been putting their shoulders to the wheel for some time now crafting a variety of initiatives and reforms designed to make America's public schools the best in the world. They are built on a number of simple, common sense concepts that experience has proved successful, including increasing parental involvement, harnessing technology as an effective tool, smaller schools, tough standards for success, and more. Some examples:

A Partnership with Parents:

Kentucky schools, using money from the federal Goals 2000 program, are putting new emphasis on strengthening parental involvement in schools through, for example, homework hotlines, alternatives to on-site school visits by parents, such as "video visits," and training for teachers in using parents as instructional volunteers in the classroom. Reform is beginning to pay off: the state's 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-graders made substantial improvement in the most recent state assessment tests.

Tougher Standards:

In Delaware, reformers have developed a tough new set of academic standards for schoolchildren. They've designed a new curricula and begun implementing it in the classroom. The goals: rigorous standards for achievement in core subjects: English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. With tougher

standards in place, teachers have clearer goals for their teaching, and students have clearer expectations for their learning.

Choosing Public Schools to Match the Child:

Across the country, school systems have moved to adopt public school choice programs, including "magnet" schools that provide accelerated learning programs in particular subjects. These and other public school choice programs let parents choose public schools best suited for their children.

Small Schools, Big Accomplishments:

In New York's East Harlem, a series of bold and challenging public schools have emerged, all centered on the central notion of small schools where parents, teachers and students join in making critical decisions about their schools. The flagship school is Central Park East High School, from which 90 percent of students earn high school diplomas—a rate nearly twice as high as for the rest of New York. The methods and approaches of Central Park East are now being duplicated in schools across New York City and in Boston as well.

The truth is that the path to educational excellence within the public schools is already being charted. Innovations in curriculum, teaching, technology, management, and more are demonstrating that public schools can and will provide the education our children deserve, *provided we give them the support and commitment they desperately need.*

Ten Things You Can Do to Help Your Schools Educate Our Children

HERE ARE TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW TO HELP THE SCHOOLS IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

1. **Show up.** Go to PTA meetings, attend back to school night, ask questions, and share your views.
2. **Take part.** Schools need volunteers. Help if you can.
3. **Teach.** Learning doesn't begin and end in the classroom. So read to your young child, or your neighbor's child, and keep tabs on their homework.
4. **Know what happens in your child's day.** Find out from your child and from your child's school what your child is learning. Then look for ways to emphasize those lessons at home.
5. **Go to school board meetings.** Your elected representatives need to know how you feel, and what you expect from your schools.
6. **Vote in school board elections.** The overwhelming majority of Americans do not vote in school board elections. Don't sit out democracy.
7. **Pay attention to politics.** It may be messy, but what happens in Washington, in the state capitol and in city hall has a profound impact on our kids' lives. Learn about the issues and then vote.
8. **Stay on top of the policymakers.** Once they're elected, officials, including school board members, sometimes forget who put them in office. Don't let them. Stay on top of them with letters, phone calls, e-mail and visits.
9. **Contribute.** If you run or own a business, find ways of contributing help and expertise to nearby schools.
10. **Build a learning community for every child.** Participate in all the ways you can, even if you have no children in school.

220-77

ACLU • VISIONS OF LIBERTY



by Ira Glasser, ACLU Executive Director

September 8, 1996

Notice of Publication

Brief - Fall

good guy - we should
write him something
to a meeting

School Vouchers and False Promises

new try
false

BS

The new look in educational fashion this season is "choice."

A powerful movement has developed to push the idea that parents ought to be able to send their children to any school they choose -- public or private -- and that the government ought to pay for that choice by giving parents vouchers worth, say, \$3,000, which they can use to pay tuition at any school they choose.

Thus if parents choose to send their child to a private school, the government would be obligated to pay part of the tuition. This would constitute a new and huge government expenditure. Where will this money come from at a time when government spending is being cut and candidates everywhere are proposing to lower taxes and reduce aid to education? There is only one place it can come from: the existing public school budget.

Government support for parents who pay private school tuition inescapably means less government money for the already-struggling public schools. There is little question that the growing movement to have the government pay for private school tuitions will result in weakening the public school system. And once it is weakened, the flight from public schools will accelerate, assisted by government dollars, until the public school system itself is mortally wounded.

So what, some say. Supporters of vouchers and the shift toward private schools argue that the competition to attract students, and therefore government dollars, among schools both public and private will improve education and result in improved academic performance, particularly for poor, minority students who currently attend inner-city schools. Such students will be better off, so the argument goes, if they can go to the same private schools where wealthy parents send their children.

There are some factual problems with this argument:

1. There is no credible evidence to support the belief that poor children, given public money to go to private schools, actually do better in math and reading than

File
ED-vouchers

comparable children in public school. An experiment to test precisely this proposition has been going on in Milwaukee, Wisconsin since 1990. The study's conclusion shows no difference, so far, in math and reading scores. (A second study by a different team of researchers recently concluded the opposite -- that the children in private schools did better than those in public schools. But the study failed to take account of differences in family background, a critical methodological error. There is no way to measure the difference a school makes if you don't compare children with similar advantages or disadvantages.)

2. Unlike public schools, private schools are not required to accept everyone. Therefore they tend to avoid students with the most problems, a luxury public schools do not have. If you pick your students right, your school's results will look good. Moreover, the notion that under a voucher system, parents will be able to choose "the best school" for their child is a fantasy if "the best school" can refuse to admit the child. That is precisely what will happen to many parents, thereby making the reality of choice something less than promised. If the voucher system is supposed to benefit the most disadvantaged children, how will that happen if those children are denied admission by "the best schools?"

3. No voucher system that has been passed or proposed pays the entire tuition at private schools. The bill that passed the House of Representatives in late 1995 provided vouchers worth \$3,000. But according to the National Association of Independent Schools, the median tuition bill for their schools was \$10,300 in 1995; that means half the schools charged more than \$10,300. In New York and New Jersey, the median tuition was \$12,500. Even in the Southeast, it was \$7,200. So in order to be able to use the \$3,000 government voucher, a parent would have to come up with the rest -- in New York that would mean \$9,500 more; nationally it would mean \$7,300 more.

Where will poor, inner-city parents get that money? Indeed, where will the average middle-class parent get \$7,300 per child per year to supplement the \$3,000 government voucher?

The fact is that if such a \$3,000 voucher were available, it would primarily provide assistance to the affluent and the wealthy, to parents who already send their children to private schools or to parents who could afford \$7,000 but not \$10,000.

The voucher plan cannot help those it is intended to help -- poor, minority, inner-city children. They will be left behind in the public schools while wealthier children flee. And those public schools will have less money because part of their budgets will have been skimmed off to pay for private school tuition of more affluent children. The public schools will deteriorate further, leaving the children who most need the schools trapped there.

The voucher plan is a scam designed to benefit the wealthy and destroy public education. It holds out hope for inner-city children -- poor minority kids in Washington, D.C. should be able to go to the same private school where President Clinton sends his daughter, so the argument goes -- but the reality is that

practically no poor, inner-city parent will be able to use the voucher because they won't be able to come up with the difference between the value of the voucher and the tuition actually charged.

4. Religious schools normally charge less than non-sectarian private schools. Thus a major consequence of a \$3,000 voucher plan will be to direct tax-raised government money away from public schools and into church schools. This raises severe constitutional questions. If a major and foreseeable consequence of voucher plans is to funnel most of the money into church schools because the value of the voucher is set to coincide with what church schools charge, then this is precisely what the founders of this country sought to avoid: money raised from everyone's taxes used to support sectarian religious institutions.

The idea of choice sounds good to parents who naturally want the best for their child. And the idea that government would give parents vouchers to use at the school of their choice sounds attractive. But unless government is willing to pay the entire tuition bill and require private schools to admit students on the same basis as public schools, there will be no choice, certainly not for parents of modest means.

The voucher movement promises choice but cannot deliver it. The idea sounds good, until you look at the actual bills being proposed and think carefully about how it would actually work. Then you see the voucher movement for what it is: a cynical attempt to grab tax dollars for the relatively wealthy and for church schools at the expense of public school budgets.

No fair-minded American should support these voucher bills. And most poor and middle-class Americans will not benefit from them. To be certain, the public school system that has been an engine of opportunity for generations of poor and middle-class Americans will be destroyed, and with it the promise of economic mobility for those who need it most.

