

The Right's "School Choice" Scheme

By Rachel Tabachnick

In June 1995, the economist Milton Friedman wrote an article for the *Washington Post* promoting the use of public education funds for private schools as a way to transfer the nation's public school systems to the private sector. "Vouchers," he wrote, "are not an end in themselves; they are a means to make a transition from a government to a market system." The article was republished by "free market" think tanks, including the Cato Institute and the Hoover Institution, with the title "Public Schools: Make Them Private."¹

While Friedman has promoted vouchers for decades, most famously in his masterwork *Free to Choose*, the story of how public funds are actually being transferred to private, often religious, schools is a study in the ability of a few wealthy families, along with a network of right-wing think tanks, to create one of the most successful "astro-turf" campaigns money could buy.² Rather than openly championing dismantling the public school system, they promote bringing market incentives and competition into education as a way to fix failing schools, particularly in low-income Black and Latino communities.

Even before the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizen's United* ruling deregulated campaign finance and unleashed millions in political donations, concentrated wealth has played a role in politics. Now in the limelight for its attacks on unions and the exposure of 800 model bills and documents, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has produced model bills favorable to its corporate and right-wing funders behind closed doors for

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Kathleen Oropenza, seen here with Florida Governor Jeb Bush, says "Florida politicians...are laser-focused on showing the whole country the most expedient way to sell public education to the highest bidder."

decades—including school vouchers and tax credit bills.³

This concentrated wealth is reaching into America's classrooms state by state,

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—Milton Friedman

promoting the transfer of public funds to private education through vouchers that allow parents to pay for tuition at private schools with public money. Promoting

"school choice" through privately run charter schools doesn't go far enough for these billionaires. Today, "private school choice" programs, as vouchers are called in the annual report of the Alliance for School Choice, are in place in 13 states and the District of Columbia.⁴ In 2011, a year when states across the nation slashed their education budgets, 41 states introduced 145 pieces of private school choice legislation.

When enacted, the scale can be enormous. In Louisiana, a recently passed school voucher program allocating private school slots for 5,000 students for the coming school year is expected to swell exponentially, encompassing as many as 380,000 students by the 2013-2014 academic year out of a total public school population of just over 700,000 students.⁵

These programs drain tax dollars from public into private schools, including into religious schools with fundamentalist curricula (see sidebar on page 7). This effort is cloaked in the language of school reform and marketed with the claim that these programs will improve the quality of education for minority students in underserved

“PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICE” GRANT RECIPIENTS

Grant Recipient	Advocates for School Choice/ AFC 2006 - 2010 Grants	Alliance for School Choice 2006 - 2010 Grants
All Children Matter, Grand Rapids, Michigan	25,000	
Alliance for School Choice, Milwaukee, Wisconsin	150,000	
Arizona STO Association		70,000
Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), Washington, D.C.		2,665,100
Believe in Louisiana	225,000	
BOAST Alliance Maryland	88,000	214,050
Center for an Educated Georgia		475,000
Center for Education Reform, Maryland		20,000
Children's Education Council of Missouri	70,000	
Children's Education Alliance of Missouri		580,000
D.C. Children First	734,000	
D.C. Parents for School Choice	669,157	
Education Reform Now Advocacy, New York	45,250	15,000
Educate New Mexico		82,000
Excellent Education for Everyone, Newark, New Jersey		212,500
Florida School Choice Fund		683,736
Florida Education Freedom Foundation		1,404,000
Hispanic CREO		481,700
Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education	140,000	
Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education		369,345
Latino Leadership, Brunswick, New Jersey		113,500
Louisiana Children's Education Advocates	275,000	400,000
Minnesota Independent School Forum		90,000
Parents for Choice in Education		
Salt Lake City, Utah	869,400	392,300
Parents for Choice in Education Political Issues Committee, Salt Lake City, Utah	610,000	
Partners for Educational Freedom in North Carolina	160,000	289,000
REACH Alliance, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	160,000	300,000
Rhode Island Scholarship Advocates	55,000	20,000
Rhode Island Scholarship Alliance	30,000	183,000
School Choice Indiana	140,000	452,000
School Choice Ohio		1,291,000
School Choice Wisconsin		896,000
Teach NYS	70,000	
Texans for School Choice	150,000	
Washington Scholarship Fund, Washington, D.C.		1,005,750

urban schools. Despite an effort to promote private school choice as a nonpartisan, grassroots effort, the engine behind the national effort and its local offshoots has been, and continues to be, a surprisingly small group of wealthy conservatives.

Betsy DeVos: Four Star General of the Privatization Juggernaut

Rob Boston of Americans United for Separation of Church and State described Betsy DeVos as the “four-star general” of the school privatization movement shortly after DeVos announced the formation of the “new” American Federation for Children (AFC) in March 2010. As Boston noted, the American Federation for Children was not new, but a rebranding of an organization called Advocates for School Choice.⁶

The American Federation for Children is now the umbrella organization for two nonprofits that have been at the center of the pro-privatization movement for over a decade. In addition to the renamed Advocates for School Choice, it includes the Alliance for School Choice, formerly known as the Education Reform Council. Both entities received extensive funding from the late John Walton, one of the Wal-Mart heirs. The boards of the two related entities included movement leaders Betsy DeVos—scion of a Christian Right family who married into the Amway home goods fortune—William Oberndorf, Clint Bolick, John Kirtley, Steve Friess (son of Foster Friess), James Leininger, John Walton, and Cory Booker.

These two nonprofits—Alliance for School Choice, a 501(c)(3) and Advocates for School Choice a.k.a. American Federation for Children, a 501(c)(4)—provided over \$17 million in grants to 35 other national and state-level pro-privatization nonprofits from 2006 to 2010.⁷ These grants represented a significant portion of the total budgets for many of the state organizations. Today Betsy DeVos and John Kirtley are the chair and vice chair of both boards.

Betsy DeVos and her husband Dick also initiated a nonprofit (527) in 2003

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with the name All Children Matter, dedicated to electing pro-voucher state legislators. [For more on the DeVoses and All Children matter, see sidebar on page 8] Today the American Federation for Children is the standard bearer for the movement and includes a network of state political action committees that have provided millions of dollars of campaign funds to legislators in states around the nation, in addition to the grants to pro-voucher nonprofits.

21st Century Strategies

When given a clear choice, voters across the United States have consistently opposed school vouchers. Between 1966 and 2000, state ballot initiatives to allow public funding for private schools were rejected 24 out of 25 times.⁸ This dismal record led the pro-voucher strategists to rebrand the movement as “school choice” and as beneficial to public schools. In 2002, Dick DeVos suggested to a Heritage Foundation audience that the school choice movement should conceal its conservative roots. He advised that “properly communicated, properly constructed, [school choice] can cut across a lot of historic boundaries, be they partisan, ethnic, or otherwise.”

He continued:

We need to be cautious about talking too much about these activities. Many of the activities and the political work that needs to go on will go on at the grass roots. It will go on qui-

etly and it will go on in the form that often politics is done—one person at a time, speaking to another person in privacy.⁹

Dick and Betsy DeVos followed through. By 2009, the media packet of the DeVos-founded All Children Matter promoted the following successes:

- Spent \$7.6 million in 2003-2004 directly impacting statewide and state legislative elections in ten targeted states.
- In races with significant ACM involvement, we have a won/loss record of 121 to 60, phenomenally successful for a political organization.
- In an era where incumbents are rarely challenged or defeated, ACM had a role in defeating 17 incumbents that opposed school choice for low-income families.
- ACM has supported the campaigns of four school choice Governors – Bobby Jindal in Louisiana, Matt Blunt in Missouri, Mitch Daniels in Indiana, and Jon Huntsman, Jr., in Utah.

How It Works: The Case of Pennsylvania in 2010

The wealthy benefactors use a system of “rewards and consequences” across the states. It includes funding the campaigns of pro-voucher candidates and funding attack ads against anti-voucher candidates. Legislators who oppose funding private

schools with public funds are accused of selling out to teachers' unions—the primary “villains” behind underperforming schools in the pro-voucher narrative.¹⁰ The 2010 election in Pennsylvania is an instructive example of the ability of American Federation for Children and its core of wealthy donors to conduct a large-scale astroturf campaign under the public radar.¹¹

First, a PAC named Students First, which would be used as the conduit for millions of dollars of political contributions, was registered by Joe Watkins in March 2010. This organization was named in such a way to be easily confused with the national school reform organization, StudentsFirst, led by former Washington, D.C. schools chief Michelle Rhee. Watkins, an African-American pastor, had advised the George W. Bush campaign and appeared in Citizens United advertisements against presidential candidate Obama in 2008, but his GOP credentials were omitted from the Students First PAC website.

Pennsylvania has no limits on individual contributions in state campaigns. During the 2010 gubernatorial election, the Students First PAC outspent the combined state teachers' unions by a factor of more than ten to one. Most of this funding came from three investment firm partners. An additional \$1.1 million of Student First's funding came from the AFC's PAC in Indiana. The Indiana PAC was registered in January 2010 under the address of Bopp, Coleson, and Bostrom, a prominent law firm representing political Right causes, including Citizens United.¹² In 2010, the Indiana PAC received over \$5.8 million from only 14 donors, including Betsy DeVos and Alice Walton, another heir to the Wal-Mart fortune, and three megadonors from Pennsylvania.¹³ The following May, Gov. Mitch Daniels signed a sweeping voucher bill.

The three Pennsylvania megadonors were described in state press as simply “pro-voucher supporters” with no mention of their association with right-wing think tanks. Joel Greenberg is on the board of American Federation for Children; Jeffrey

Yass is on the board of the Cato Institute; and Arthur Dantchik is on the board of the Institute for Justice, which is working to circumvent or change the wording in state constitutions that disallows public funding of religious schools.¹⁴ There was also no Pennsylvania press coverage in 2010 of the Betsy DeVos-led AFC.

Students First poured more than \$6.5 million into the 2010 election, most of it in the gubernatorial primary in support of Anthony H. Williams, an African-American pro-voucher candidate and Democratic state senator. Their candidate had little chance of winning, but the ploy apparently lured the eventual Democratic nominee, Dan Onorato, into embracing some of Williams' voucher plan. Onorato

Students First blanketed the airwaves with ads promoting SB1 as the salvation of poor urban children and attacking the bill's opponents as being under the influence of “powerful teachers' unions.”

failed to secure the millions in funding for himself that the pro-voucher movement had given Williams, but he did anger labor unions across the state. Republican candidate Tom Corbett won and Williams sponsored a voucher bill in early 2011—Senate Bill 1 (SB1). Corbett was the keynote speaker at the AFC national conference in 2011.

Students First worked with prominent Republican media firm Brabender Cox to generate support for the legislation, blanketing the airwaves with ads promoting SB1 as the salvation of poor urban children and attacking the bill's opponents as being

under the influence of “powerful teachers' unions.” Joining the push for SB1 was the Scaife- and DeVos-funded FreedomWorks, the Koch-funded Americans for Prosperity, the Scaife-funded Commonwealth Foundation, and the state pro-voucher organization REACH Alliance. REACH, by the way, secured \$460,000 from AFC/Advocates for School Choice and Alliance for School Choice from 2006 to 2010.

Nevertheless, Pennsylvanians across the political spectrum opposed the school voucher scheme and the bill failed to pass.

Still, the pro-voucher effort continues. Students First has already received \$1.4 million in 2012 to continue the battle—\$1.25 million from AFC and \$50,000 each from Greenberg, Yass, and Dantchik.

Using Corporate Tax Credits to Promote “Choice”

Although Pennsylvania does not have a voucher program, the state has one of the largest school choice programs in the country, second only to Florida. This is made possible through a corporate tax credit program named the Education Improvement Tax Credit, initiated in 2001.

State Senator Sam Rohrer (R-128th District), an opponent of teaching evolution in schools, claims credit for writing the state's education tax bill. Under the law, companies can divert their tax liability to private school scholarships, with 75 percent credited toward their state taxes—90 percent on a commitment of two consecutive years. According to Pennsylvania accounting firms, as well as the private schools promoting the tax credit and REACH Alliance, these donations cost the corporation little or nothing, and also count as a charitable contribution on the corporation's federal taxes.¹⁵ (Individuals contributing to nonprofit charities still pay the bulk of their donations from their own pockets.) The tax credit has been expertly (and falsely) marketed in Pennsylvania as costing the taxpayers nothing.

In Pennsylvania, some of these funds are going to schools using texts from A Beka Book, Bob Jones University Press, and

other fundamentalist curricula. [see sidebar below, as well as “From Schoolhouse to Statehouse” in the Summer 2010 issue of *The Public Eye*]. Some of the private schools now receiving students through this funding have testified to the legislature in support of vouchers and bussed students to the state capitol for rallies in support of SB-1. One of the pro-voucher schools was featured on the Glenn Beck Show in 2011, with a parent representative celebrating the school’s promotion of “biblical principles” and the “flight of public school students to private schools” to escape secularism and socialism.¹⁶ This same academy takes its students on field trips to the Creation Science Museum south of Cincinnati, where exhibits show dinosaurs and people living on earth together.

Pennsylvania is one of 37 states that have strict constitutional prohibitions against using public money for religious schools, and specifically disallows appropriations to

educational institutions “not under the absolute control of the Commonwealth.”¹⁷ The corporations’ education tax credit, however, is not the obvious violation of state law that a school voucher program would be. Florida’s constitution also disallows using public funds for religious schools, but in November, Floridians will be voting on an initiative that could eliminate the prohibition.

The Fight in Florida

The Florida State Supreme Court may have determined in 2006 that school vouchers violate the state Constitution, but that hasn’t limited the promotion of school privatization by its right-wing supporters.

Florida has the largest private school choice program in the nation. Corporations can donate to private school scholarship programs and be credited 100 percent of that donation through the Florida Tax

Credit (FTC) program. In 2011-2012, the cap on the program was \$175 million; a bill passed in March increased the cap to \$229 million for the 2012-2013 school year.¹⁸ Although corporations are receiving a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, the program has been described in the press as “donations from corporations.”

While school choice funds are administered through a long list of education nonprofits in Pennsylvania, Florida funds are funneled through a single entity called Step Up for Students. This is one of five different names used by the nonprofit Florida School Choice Fund, Inc., founded in 2000 and chaired by John Kirtley, vice chair of the American Federation for Children.¹⁹ Eighty-eight percent of students receiving these funds attend religious schools. As in Pennsylvania, some are Catholic, Jewish, and other faiths, but a large percentage are conservative evangelical schools using A Beka Book and other fundamentalist textbook series.²⁰

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush continues to promote school privatization around the nation. In March, a bill he promoted was narrowly defeated in the state’s Senate. The bill was similar to “Parent Trigger” bills being considered in 20 states that provide a mechanism to turn public schools over to private management. Parent Trigger model bills were spearheaded by the rightwing policy network ALEC and provide a process for a simple majority of parents at a school to choose one of three options: turn their public school into a charter school; supply students with a 75 percent per pupil cost voucher; or close the school.²¹

They may be outspent, but in Florida, true grass roots organizers are fighting back. Fund Education Now, a group formed in 2009 by three Florida moms, has grown into a “statewide nonpartisan alliance of dedicated advocates” that contributed to the coordination of the successful opposition to the Parent Trigger bill.

One of Florida’s Fund Education Now founders, Kathleen Oropeza, warns that the battle is far from finished. Her focus is a November 2012 ballot initiative that

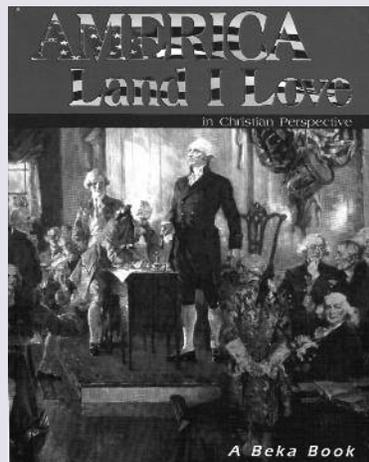
TAX DOLLARS SUPPORTING CREATIONISM

The private “school choice” movement has found a way to circumvent the federal courts, the National Council for Science Education (NCSE) and the ACLU by thinking outside of the box.

The Education Improvement Tax Credit program in Pennsylvania has provided a way to use public funds to teach creationism and global warming denial to students enrolled in religious schools. This circumvents the ruling in *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, a 2005 federal case resulting in a decision that Intelligent Design is not science, and should not be taught in public school science classes.

Many Pennsylvania schools receiving education tax credit funding are using A Beka Book and other fundamentalist curricula.⁴¹ These textbooks are hostile to Roman Catholicism and other Christian and non-Christian religions, and teach a radical form of market fundamentalism, young earth creationism, and distorted American history where, in the words of researcher Frances Paterson, “Democrats are deluded, liberals are villains, and conservatives are heroes.”⁴²

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and The National Center for Science Education, (whose logo is “Defending the Teaching of Evolution and Climate Science”) led the fight against Intelligent Design. Nevertheless, when contacted, both institutions described the Education Improvement Tax Credit issue as being outside the boundaries of their mission, since the teaching of creationism is taking place in private schools.



This textbook teaches “The greatest struggle of all time, the Battle of Armageddon, will occur in the Middle East when Christ returns to set up His kingdom on earth.”

THE DeVOSES—DOLLARS AT THE INTERSECTION

Dick and Betsy DeVos represent the merger of two wealthy and politically influential families.

Dick DeVos is the son of Richard DeVos, one of the founders of the Amway pyramidal home products business and owner of the Orlando Magic basketball team. Listed as the 60th wealthiest person in the United States and the 205th richest in the world, his net worth has been estimated at \$5 billion. He has played a central role in bringing together the “doers and the donors” as he once described the New Right merger of the Religious Right with major funders of the political Right.

Dick’s wife, Betsy, is the daughter of Elsa and the late Erik Prince, major contributors to conservative causes including Focus on Family and the Family Research Council. Betsy’s brother Erik Prince founded the infamous military contractor Blackwater USA (rebranded “Xe”), which sought to privatize another type of activity that previously had been presumed to be under the control of government agencies. Betsy DeVos heads the American Federation for Children, the national umbrella organization at the center of the private school choice movement.

In 2003, Dick and Betsy DeVos founded All Children Matter, a 527 organization,⁴³ and established Political Action Committees (PACs) in Virginia, Indiana, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Ohio. PACs can make contributions directly to political campaigns. All Children Matter’s media kit advertised expenditures of \$7.6 million in 2003-2004, “directly impacting statewide and state legislative elections in 10 targeted states.”⁴⁴

In 2008, All Children Matter was fined \$5.2 million in Ohio for breaking campaign finance law, a decision that was appealed and confirmed in 2010. All Children Matter was moving money from the Virginia PAC to PACs in states around the nation. Some states allow unlimited contributions, but Ohio fined All Children Matter for contributions over the maximum allowed. In 2011, it was reported that the fine was still unpaid. Wisconsin also fined the organization \$500 for supporting candidates without registering a PAC.

Between 2009 and 2011, the All Children Matter state PACs were disbanded. During the same time period, PACs affiliated with the Betsy DeVos-led American Federation for Children were registered in several of the same states.

attempts to remove the “no aid” clause (also known as Blaine Amendments) in the constitution that prevents public funds from being used for religious schools or causes. As part of the effort to discredit the “no aid” clauses, pro-voucher groups claim they are relics of nativist anti-Catholicism. In July 2011, the ACLU published a guide titled “Exposing the Myth of Anti-Catholic Bias: The Fabrication of History to Repeal the Florida Constitution’s No Aid Provision.”²²

Oropeza points out the references to the Blaine Amendments in ALEC’s most recent “Report Card on American Education: 17th Edition.”²³ The ALEC report argues that it is the Ku Klux Klan that has kept public funds from going to private and religious schools. In fact, the push for non-sectarian education and some prohibitions on state funding of religious schools pre-

date the establishment of the KKK and Blaine (whose name is being attached to the amendments).²⁴

While the effort to remove the “no aid” clause is being promoted in the name of “religious freedom,” it would “gut church-state separation.”²⁵ According to the executive director of the Florida ACLU, “the proposal continues to mislead voters by failing to inform them of the chief purpose and actual impact of the amendment—to virtually require taxpayer funding of religious activities of churches, mosques and synagogues.” Ironically, Christian Right organizations might actually regret the results of overturning the “no aid” clause, as it could result in public funding of non-Christian faiths.²⁶

Floridians have already had a taste of the possible scale of the problems to come if their constitution is altered. A Florida

charter school going into bankruptcy was taken over by Scientologists, who held the school’s Christmas party at a Scientology church and have required teachers to take Scientology training courses.²⁷

Promoting Vouchers to Latino and African-American Leaders

By the time of Dick DeVos’ 2002 Heritage Foundation speech, strategists had already begun trying to rebrand vouchers, which have a racist history. Following federal efforts to enforce the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Southern states devised a “private school plan” to defend segregation by leaving public schools and taking the money with them. Georgia Governor Herman Talmadge advanced a constitutional amendment that could have allowed the privatization of the state’s entire public school system. “In the event of court-ordered desegregation, school buildings would be closed, and students would receive grants to attend private, segregated schools.”²⁸

More recently, voucher supporters recognized the need to reinvent the movement by obscuring its White, conservative support base and cultivating the support of Latino and African-American leaders as the face of the movement. These leaders have valid complaints about inequality in public education and the failure of public schools to provide quality education to low income Black and Latino children. Having their parents support vouchers—and charters—in the name of improving education is a potent political force.

The most prominent among these leaders is Howard Fuller, the former Black Nationalist who brought vouchers to the Milwaukee school system when he led it in the early 1990s. In August 2000, he launched the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO).²⁹ Its major funders included John Walton and the Harry and Lynde Bradley Foundation, based in Milwaukee, which also funded Fuller’s Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, founded in 1995. These funders, as People for the American Way commented in an extensive report on

the group, are “better known for supporting education privatization and affirmative action rollbacks than empowerment of the African-American community or low-income families.”³⁰

The conservatives had found their standard bearer. BAEO immediately launched a massive media campaign in support of vouchers in Washington, D.C. The Annenberg Public Policy Center reported that the BAEO spent over \$4.3 million on print and television ads. By 2002, BAEO had 33 chapters.³¹ And today, about one quarter of Milwaukee’s students use vouchers to attend private, often religious schools.

According to school choice supporter Hubert Morken’s extensive histories of the programs, outreach to key African American Democrats in various parts of the country was the product of carefully cultivated relationships with free-market think tanks and organizations like the Pennsylvania Family Institute and REACH Alliance. Particularly important for recruiting supporters in these ranks is the former Congressman, Rev. Floyd Flake, a BAEO leader.³² Flake is the longtime senior pastor of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral

in Queens, one of the largest churches in New York. In 1999, Flake introduced George W. Bush to an audience at the Manhattan Institute and described the future president as his “compatriot in the politics to change public education in the United States.” In 2000, Flake became head of the charter schools division of Edison Schools, at that time the largest for-profit school management company in the country.

Morken quotes Flake,

“I was on the phone Thursday with Tom Ridge, who is the governor of Pennsylvania, who worked with me in Congress, where they are taking over the schools and may be taking over the Philadelphia schools. So I’ll be meeting with [Philadelphia] Mayor Street on Wednesday morning. I’ve already had telephone conversations with the secretary of state of New Jersey where they are taking over the schools in Camden and Jersey City. I’m all over the country right now.”

Shortly thereafter, Edison took over management of 20 Philadelphia schools.

Private school choice can be used as a wedge issue to bring Latinos and African Americans into the Republican Party.

Morken describes Flake as “targeting core groups of swing voters” in “Black and Latino caucuses” and often promoting charter schools from “the pulpits of their churches.” Morken states that Flake was “at the center of a major funding coalition in New York state” that included rightwing funder John Walton. Flake and his wife had founded a 750-student private school affiliated with their church in 1982; it closed in June 2012 in the face of a \$1.7 million budget shortfall.³³ Edison Schools failed to produce the promised improvements and their contracts for Philadelphia schools were ended in 2008 and 2011.³⁴

The AFC claims that 91 percent of Latinos polled in five states support vouchers or corporate tax credit programs, and that this will be an issue in the 2012 election.³⁵ AFC and its related entities provided almost a half million dollars in funding for the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options between 2006 and 2010.

Private school choice is not only a way to privatize education but viewed by some as a wedge issue to bring Latinos and African Americans into the Republican Party.³⁶

Grading the Privatization Report Card

The pro-corporate ideology behind school choice asserts that business style competition will be invariably good for education, and that putting school



management and teaching into private (and nonunion) hands will make education less expensive, more efficient and more effective.

The statistics do not bear out their claims. By the time of the 2010 election and 2011 campaign for Pennsylvania's SB1, test results for the two oldest school voucher programs in the nation—Milwaukee and Cleveland—had reported disappointing results. Participating students scored no better or worse than their peers who had remained in the public schools.³⁷ Voucher proponents responded by asserting that voucher students attending private schools graduate at a higher rate. They fail to mention the lack of standards or accountability for some of the institutions bestowing those diplomas.

Much of the positive reporting on private school choice quotes the Foundation for Educational Excellence, founded by Milton Friedman; the Department of Education Reform at University of Arkansas, recipient of a \$300 million donation from the Walton Foundation; and other entities funded by pro-privatization supporters.

Louisiana's new voucher program, signed into law by Gov. Bobby Jindal in spring 2012, has a list of approved schools that includes church schools using home schooling DVDs for instruction and schools that lack the facilities to house the students they are offering to enroll for the 2012-2013 school year. Louisiana legislators threatened to withdraw support if an Islamic school was included in the approved list, of which over 90 percent are Christian schools.³⁸ The program promises to be such a debacle that the Cato Institute is already recommending a corporate tax credit program instead of vouchers.³⁹

But the private school choice juggernaut will roll on and the claims of privatization as the magic bullet will continue, no matter how baseless these claims may be. The multi-billion dollar budget for the nation's schools is a rich prize for those who would profit from the privatization of public schools, and they are joined by equally determined anti-public education ideologues. In May 2011, a headline in the *Wall*

Street Journal trumpeted, "The Evidence is In: School Vouchers Work."⁴⁰

Endnotes

¹ Milton Friedman, "Public Schools: Make Them Private," *Cato Institute Briefing Paper* No. 23, June 23, 1995. <http://www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp-023.html> and http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/0817928723_339.pdf

² Astroturf, a derivation of the trade name for synthetic grass, refers to a corporate, political and/or organizational effort disguised as a "grassroots" movement. Astroturf campaigns are increasingly used to disguise the intentions of Right wing individuals and organizations.

³ Alec Exposed, a project of the Center for Media and Democracy, http://www.alecexposed.org/wiki/ALEC_Exposed and "Defending Justice, An Activist Resource Kit", Political Research Associates, http://www.publiceye.org/defendingjustice/pdfs/chapters/cons_infra.pdf

⁴ "The School Choice Virtual Yearbook," Alliance for School Choice, 2012. <http://www.allianceforschool-choice.org/yearbook>

⁵ Louisiana's Act 2 includes options for students to attend other public schools as well as private schools. However, the list of approximately 118 approved schools offering slots for 2012 - 2013 currently includes only one public school.

⁶ The AFC's 2009 990 tax form includes the legal name change from Advocates for School Choice to American Federation for Children.

⁷ See associated chart in this issue or at www.publiceye.org.

⁸ Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, "School Vouchers: Voters Say No," *Americans for Religious Liberty*, http://www.arlinc.org/articles/article_voterssayno.html

⁹ Rachel Tabachnick, "Strategy for Privatizing Public Schools Spelled out by Dick DeVos in 2002 Heritage Foundation Speech," May 3, 2011, <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/5/3/12515/58655>

¹⁰ Rachel Tabachnick, "Betsy DeVos Announces PA Governor Tom Corbett Will Keynote Pro-Voucher National Policy Summit," April 26, 2011 <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/4/26/112152/230>

¹¹ Rachel Tabachnick, "Voucher Advocate Betsy DeVos, Right-Wing Think Tanks Behind Koch-Style Attack on PA Public Schools," April 20, 2011. <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/4/20/232844/831>

¹² Bopp, Coleson, and Bostrom has represented Citizens United, Focus on the Family, National Organization for Marriage, Concerned Women of America, National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Foundation, Club for Growth and the Republican Governors Association.

¹³ Rachel Tabachnick, "Pro-Voucher Astroturfing: Campaigns Across Nation Coordinated by DeVos, Funded by a Few Mega-Donors", April 24, 2011. <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/4/24/22559/1547>.

¹⁴ Greenberg <http://www.federationforchildren.org/leadership>, Yass <http://www.cato.org/people/directors.html>, Dantchik <http://www.ij.org/about/board>

¹⁵ Sample Tax Credit Calculations, REACH Foundation, 2012. <http://www.paschoolchoice.org/eitc/sample-tax-credit-calculations/>

¹⁶ Fox News, April 28, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ve0_nDYBZHC&feature=youtu.be

¹⁷ Article III, sections 15, 29 and 30. http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Constitution.html

¹⁸ Florida spends about 30 billion dollars on K-12 education for 2,645,000 students. Florida Senate, 2012 Summary of Legislation Passed. Committee on Education Pre-K-12. "CS/CS/CS/HB 859— Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. <http://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/billssummaries/2012/html/182http://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/billssummaries/2012/html/182>.

¹⁹ Step Up For Students website. <http://www.stepupforstudents.org/>

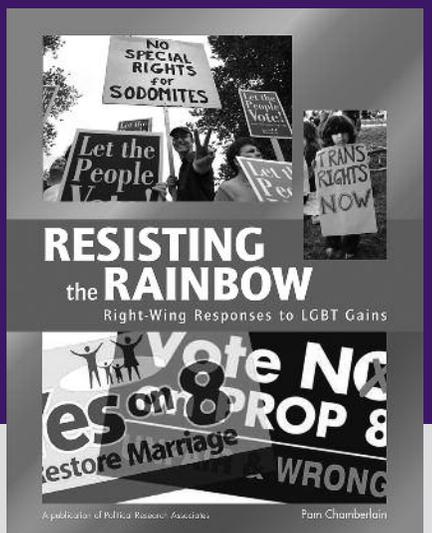
²⁰ One of the several names used by the Florida School Choice Fund is Florida Alliance for Choice in Education or FACE. A promotional webpage for FACE promotes some of the participating schools in a webpage titled "School Spotlights." Of the 13 schools highlighted, five reference their A Beka curriculum in the school summary. The websites of the schools indicate that at least nine of the 13 are using A Beka textbooks.

²¹ ALEC, <http://www.webcitation.org/5yGOUW6LI> Also see ALEC Exposed at http://alecexposed.org/wiki/Bills_Affecting_Americans'_Rights_to_a_Public_Education

²² "No aid" clauses have surprising allies. In Pennsylvania, representatives of the Orthodox Union (OU) have written opinion pieces in support of vouchers, because they will provide financial support for families sending their children to Jewish day schools. During the 2010 elections, this battle for private school dollars took an ugly turn, when a PAC in Florida funded solely by the AFC attacked a Jewish candidate for attorney general, State Senator Dan Gelber, with full-page "wanted" posters accusing him of "crimes against Jewish education." ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief and the ACLU of Florida; "Exposing the Myth of Anti-Catholic Bias: The Fabrication of History to Repeal the Florida Constitution's No-Aid Provision", July 2011 <http://www.aclu.org/files/assets/aclu-exposing-themythofanticatholicbias.pdf>

²³ The report was co-authored by Dr. Matthew Ladner of Milton Friedman's Foundation for Educational Choice and a former Director of State Projects for the Alliance of School Choice. The forward is by Gov. Mitch Daniels,

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who signed the Indiana voucher bill, and the report was financed by the Gleason Family Foundation and the Allegheny Foundation, one of the Scaife foundations. Dr. Matthew Ladner and Dan Lips, "Report Card on American Education: Ranking State K-12 Performance, Progress, and Reform," 2012. <http://www.alec.org/publications/report-card-on-american-education/>

²⁴ Steven Green, "The Insignificance of the Blaine Amendment," *Brigham Young Law Review*, April 12, 2008. <http://lawreview.byu.edu/archives/2008/2/5GREEN.FIN.pdf> Also see Rob Boston, "The Blaine Game: Supporters Of Government Aid To Religious Schools Are Trying To Eliminate State Constitutional Provisions That Stand In Their Way," Americans United, September 2002. <http://www.au.org/church-state/september-2002-church-state/featured/the-blaine-game> and the ACLU's "Exposing the Myth of Anti-Catholic Bias" <http://www.aclufl.org/pdfs/ACLU-ExposingtheMythofAntiCatholicBias.pdf>

²⁵ Derek C. Araujo "Ballot Initiative, Motivated by CSH Lawsuit, Would Gut FL Constitution's Church-State Separation," Center for Inquiry, May 9, 2011. http://www.centerforinquiry.net/blogs/entry/ballot_initiative_motivated_by_csh_lawsuit_would_gut_fl_constitutions_church/

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Unsigned editorial, "Charter school dangers on display in Scientology case," *Tampa Bay Times*, March 5, 2012 <http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/editorials/article1218150.ecc>

²⁸ Kevin M. Kreuse discusses this and other strategies in White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism. <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/8043.html>. More recently, the pro-privatization movement has been closely aligned with the Institute for Justice, known for its effort to end affirmative action. Clint Bolick, former president of Alliance for School Choice and co-founder of Institute for Justice, described Lani Guinier, a Clinton nominee for Assistant Attorney General as one of "Clinton's Quota Queens" in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, April 30, 1993.

²⁹ Howard Fuller served as the chair of the BAEO board of directors until 2010. The board also includes Pennsylvania's Dwight Evans, Anthony H. Williams, and Dawn Chavous, executive director of Pennsylvania's Student First and former chief of staff for Williams. Kevin Chavous, a former member of the Council of the District of Columbia, followed Fuller as the chair of the BAEO board and is also on the board of AFC and Democrats for Education Reform.

³⁰ "Community Voice or Captive of the Right? A Closer Look at the Black Alliance for Educational Options," People For the American Way Foundation, December 2001. <http://www.pfaw.org/media-center/publications/community-voice-or-captive-right-closer-look-black-alliance-educational-op>

³¹ "Community Voice or Captive of the Right? A Closer Look at the Black Alliance for Educational Options. Expanding the PR machine." People For the American Way Foundation, December 2001. <http://www.pfaw.org/media-center/publications/community-voice/expanding-the-pr-machine>

³² Hubert Morken and Jo Renee Formicola, *The Politics of School Choice* (MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999)

³³ Maria Alvarez, "Allen Christian School in Queens to Close," *Newsday*, February 15, 2012 <http://www.newsday.com/news/new-york/allen-christian-school-in-queens-to-close-1.3533617>

³⁴ Chaka Fattah, "Edison Schools Perform Poorly Nationwide," *Education News*, April 5, 2004. <http://www.educationnews.org/articles/edison-schools-perform-poorly-nationwide.html>

³⁵ "Education Trumps Immigration among Top-Tier Issues for Latino Voters, New Poll Finds," *American Federation for Children*, May 15, 2012. <http://www.federationforchildren.org/articles/689>

³⁶ For example, the ministry of Apostle Alice Patterson, who stood next to Gov. Rick Perry while he spoke during his prayer event in Houston in August 2011, has hosted events to promote school vouchers, including the African American Pastors' and Leaders' VIP Summit in 2007, featuring former Secretary of Education Rod Paige,

Gov. Perry, and James Leininger. Patterson writes about traveling the state with David Barton to speak to African American churches about the Democratic Party as the source of American racism and as a "demonic structure."

³⁷ Erin Richards and Amy Hetzner, "Choice schools not outperforming MPS," *JS Online*, Milwaukee-Wisconsin Journal Sentinel, March 29, 2011. <http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/118820339.html> and "Debunking the Myths about Vouchers," Education Voters of Pennsylvania <http://www.educationvoterspa.org/index.php/site/issues/debunking-the-myths-about-vouchers/>

³⁸ Louisiana Department of Education, "Scholarship Participants Map," http://www.louisianaschools.net/resources/community/scholarships_map.aspx

³⁹ Andrew J. Coulson, "State Rep. Balks at Voucher Funding for Muslim School," *Cato@Liberty* <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/state-rep-balks-at-voucher-funding-for-muslim-school/>

⁴⁰ Jason L. Riley, "The Evidence Is In: School Vouchers Work," *Wall St. Journal Online*, May 3, 2011. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703396404576283381160558552.html>

⁴¹ Rachel Tabachnick, "From Schoolhouse to Statehouse," *Public Eye*. Summer 2010. http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v26n1/schoolhouse_to_statehouse.html and Rachel Tabachnick, "Vouchers/Tax Credits Funding Creationism, Revisionist History, Hostility Toward Other Religions" *Talk2Action*, May 25, 2011. <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/5/25/84149/9275>

⁴² Paterson, Frances Democracy and Intolerance: Christian School Curricula, School Choice, and Public Policy, (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 2003).

⁴³ A 527 is a tax-exempt organization created for the purpose of influencing the election or appointment of public officials.

⁴⁴ All Children Matter Media Kit. <http://web.archive.org/web/20090507235854/http://www.allchildrenmatter.org/mediakit.php>