

May 31, 2002

Dear Education Reporters:

**SUBJECT: U.S. SUPREME COURT RULING ON CLEVELAND SCHOOL VOUCHERS**

In recognition of the pending decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on the constitutionality of Cleveland's school voucher program, and the expected media interest in the subject, we are pleased to provide you with updated information about the nation's voucher programs. Aside from any constitutional issues, we believe the public's concerns about school voucher programs focus more on their impact on students, public schools and taxpayers' wallets. We hope the evidence spotlighted in this media kit will be helpful to you as you prepare your coverage of the Court's ruling.



While we are available to answer any of your questions, or to provide you with further information, we also recommend you contact school board members from Cleveland, Milwaukee and Florida for their personal insights on how vouchers have impacted their public schools and communities.

- Margaret Hopkins, Vice-Chair, Cleveland School Board  
Home phone: 216-651-2414
- Jennifer Morales, Member, Milwaukee School Board  
Home phone: 414-964-9469
- Jane Gallucci, Member, Pinellas County (Fla.) School Board  
Home phone: 727-785-1813; Cell Phone: 727-215-2503
- Dr. John DeWitt, Chairman, Escambia County (Fla.) School Board  
Home phone: 850-476-6968
- Janice Mee, Member, Sarasota County (Fla.) School Board  
Home phone: 941-966-7702

Also enclosed to this memo are direct comments from the five school board members listed above. You are free to incorporate these quotes into any of your coverage.

As always, please contact Renee Williams Hockaday at NSBA with any questions. She can be reached at 703-838-6717, or [rhockaday@nsba.org](mailto:rhockaday@nsba.org).

A B C D

Anne L. Bryant  
Executive Director

Enclosures



## **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS ON THE REAL PROBLEMS WITH VOUCHERS**

“For policymakers and taxpayers, the overarching problem with the Milwaukee voucher program is the lack of useful data on participating students and schools. School board members are responsible for the thoughtful and effective spending of the tax dollars entrusted to us, but who is overseeing the public’s investment in voucher schools? No one.” *Jennifer Morales, Milwaukee school board member*

“While vouchers are intended for families with limited resources, 40 percent of the enrollees in the last school year were from families above the poverty level and 25 percent of new voucher students were previously enrolled in private schools. Vouchers have taken scarce dollars away from our public schools and have done nothing for our 76,000 students. Where are the benefits to Cleveland’s public school children from Ohio’s voucher program?” *Margaret Hopkins, vice-chair of Cleveland school board*

“The special education voucher program is a train wreck that has already happened in Florida, with survivors who already have serious impairments, and, due to the wreck have had their learning stifled by the government. As long as the powers that be in the state believe that vouchers carry absolutely no accountability our children with disabilities are extremely vulnerable to the unscrupulous. Voucher schools have gone belly up. The public schools get the students back with no money and a loss of valuable learning time. Time that these students do not have.” *Jane Gallucci, Pinellas County (Fla.) school board member*

“Until public education is adequately funded, taxpayer dollars should not be diverted to private and religious schools. And, it is a double standard to place strict accountability standards on public schools but have no accountability on private schools when they also receive education tax dollars.” *Dr. John DeWitt, chairman of Escambia County (Fla.) school board*

“We believe in public school choice and we offer choice, but wherever the students go within our school district, public accountability follows them. That is not true with the voucher programs. Florida has the FCAT test in grades 2 through 10. Voucher students *may* take the FCAT but their scores are not reported and their school is not graded. There is no accountability for achievement gained or lost.” *Janice Mee, Sarasota County (Fla.) school board member*



## THE PLAIN FACTS ABOUT VOUCHERS

While both opponents and proponents of vouchers often tout theories of what vouchers will mean, there is actual evidence from existing voucher programs to help answer certain questions. The following facts shed light on vouchers' impact on public schools' budgets, student achievement, taxpayer accountability, students' rights, and public opinion.

### VOUCHERS DRAIN DOLLARS FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- ✓ The Milwaukee voucher program, with 10,789 students, cost an estimated \$59.4 million in the 2001-02 school year, with nearly half the cost paid by diverting state aid from Milwaukee Public Schools. During the 2000-01 school year, as many as 238 public school districts in Wisconsin lost tax dollars to the voucher program, prompting property tax increases. *"MPCP Facts and Figures for 2001-2002", Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; "Funding for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program," Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau, May 2001.*
- ✓ The Cleveland voucher program, with about 4,200 students, costs an estimated \$14.9 million a year, with the funds coming from the Cleveland Public Schools' share of Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid. That money is supposed to pay for pre-school, all day kindergarten, smaller class sizes and reading improvement programs for disadvantaged *public* school students. The voucher program has largely benefited students *already* in private school. *"High Court, High Noon," Education Week, Feb. 13, 2002; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3317.029; "Cleveland School Vouchers: Where the Students Come From," Policy Matters Ohio, 2001.*

### VOUCHER SCHOOLS CREATE A U-TURN ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EDUCATION

"There are people who are afraid of accountability systems, and, therefore, I become suspicious. If you're afraid to be held accountable, something must be going wrong. That's how I view it." *President Bush on the No Child Left Behind education law. "Bush Pushes Education Accountability, United Press International, May 6, 2002.*

- ✓ Milwaukee voucher schools face no requirements for teacher certification, curriculum content, student testing, student discipline, enrollment diversity or compliance with open meetings and open records acts. In Cleveland, voucher schools do not have to meet the state's student testing requirements and religiously affiliated ones do not need state accreditation. *School Choice Tradeoffs: Liberty, Equity and Diversity, Godwin & Kemerer, 2002; Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3313.976(A)(3).*
- ✓ In Florida, voucher schools face no requirements for how they spend tax dollars, curriculum content, student testing, specialized services for students with disabilities, nor do they have to employ teachers with state certification or even college degrees. *"Disabled Voucher Program," St. Petersburg Times, March 24, 2002.*

- ✓ “We don’t ask for an accounting of how the money was spent.” *Joanne Carrin, Florida Department of Education spokeswoman, on oversight of the state’s voucher program. “Control Limited in State Voucher Program,” Sun-Sentinel (Ft. Lauderdale, FL), Oct. 14, 2001.*

### **VOUCHER SCHOOLS CHOOSE WHICH STUDENTS TO ADMIT AND KEEP**

- ✓ In Milwaukee, voucher schools do not have to “readmit” students. The state’s official evaluation found an annual attrition rate of more than 33 percent and it was not random. The students who left – or were asked to leave – voucher schools were lower achieving students than the ones who remained. The principal of one voucher school admitted some students were shown the door – “By the end of the second year, it was clear they were not working out, and we let a number go.”

*The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America’s First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000*

- ✓ “They find ways of rejecting students. They admit them, then they reject them. They take public dollars, but they don’t want to give up their (rules).” *Wisconsin Rep. Annette “Polly” Williams, the founder of the Milwaukee program. “Questions Linger Over Vouchers”, Sun-Sentinel, May 9, 1999.*

### **VOUCHERS LEAVE BEHIND THE NEEDIEST CHILDREN**

- ✓ Milwaukee voucher schools do not have to accept students with disabilities, including learning disabled children. Cleveland voucher schools also do not have to educate students with disabilities.

*The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America’s First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000. School Choice Tradeoffs: Liberty, Equity and Diversity, R. Kenneth Godwin & Frank R. Kemerer, 2002.*

- ✓ A former founder of Cleveland voucher schools and an Ohio education official have admitted that students with disabilities are excluded from the voucher program. Special education students “were actively counseled out of the program,” the state official said. *“Whose Choice” series, Akron Beacon Journal, Dec. 13-15, 1999.*
- ✓ Nationwide, 68 percent of private schools in the inner cities of large metro areas said they would “definitely or probably” *not* be willing to participate in a voucher program if they had to accept “special needs” students, such as those with learning disabilities, limited English speaking or low academic achievement. *“Barriers, Benefits and Costs of Using Private Schools to Alleviate Overcrowding in Public Schools,” U.S. Dept. of Education, 1998.*

### **CREDIBLE EVIDENCE SHOWS VOUCHERS HAVE NOT RAISED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

- ✓ The official evaluations of the Milwaukee and Cleveland voucher programs have “found little or no difference in voucher and public school students’ performance.” *“School Vouchers: Publicly Funded Programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee,” U.S. General Accounting Office, 2001.*
- ✓ Students who attended private schools established in response to the Cleveland voucher program scored lower than their public school peers in all academic subjects. *“A Comparative Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program,” Kim Metcalf, 1998. (Official evaluator of program)*
- ✓ A GAO review of school voucher evaluations cast doubt on the validity of some research that has claimed positive results from vouchers. The review noted such studies had flaws

significant enough to preclude their inclusion in GAO's report to Congress. *"School Vouchers: Publicly Funded Programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee," U.S. General Accounting Office, 2001.*

#### **THE PUBLIC – WHICH WOULD PAY FOR VOUCHER PROGRAMS – OPPOSES THEM**

- ✓ Voters have rejected every voucher proposal put before them in the last 30 years. In 2000, 71 percent of California voters rejected a voucher plan, while 69 percent of Michigan voters did the same. People of all races, political parties and income levels voted against vouchers. *Exit Polls for California, CNN.com, Nov. 7, 2001; "The Voucher Vote," Palm Beach Post, Nov. 13, 2000.*

#### **STUDENTS MUST ABANDON BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS IN VOUCHER SCHOOLS**

- ✓ Students whose tuition is paid by taxpayers do not have basic constitutional rights in voucher schools. Such rights include freedom of religion and expression, equal protection and due process. Though such rights initially were guaranteed to students in Milwaukee, the requirement was eliminated and voucher schools are only "advised" to meet those rights. The change occurred after voucher schools and pro-voucher lawmakers complained bitterly. *School Choice Tradeoffs: Liberty, Equity and Diversity, R. Kenneth Godwin & Frank R. Kemerer, 2002.*

#### **STUDENTS WITH UNINVOLVED PARENTS LEAST LIKELY TO BENEFIT FROM VOUCHERS**

- ✓ In Milwaukee, voucher students are from families with fewer children, better educated parents (especially mothers), parents with higher educational expectations for their children, parents who are more involved in their school work and more active in their schools. *The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America's First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000*

#### **FOR SERVICES PROVIDED, VOUCHER SCHOOLS COST TAXPAYERS MORE THAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

- ✓ Columbia University Professor Henry Levin found that Milwaukee voucher schools cost taxpayers almost \$1,000 *more* per student than Milwaukee Public Schools when comparing the same grade levels, and factoring out transportation and special education costs, which voucher schools do not have to provide. *The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America's First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000*

#### **VOUCHERS AS "ESCAPE HATCHES"? FACTS TELL DIFFERENT STORY**

- ✓ In Cleveland, only 21 percent of the voucher students in 2001 had ever been enrolled in public schools – a stark contradiction to the common claims that the program enables students to escape public schools. In Milwaukee, in the 1998-99 school year (when the program experienced its largest growth), only 23 percent of the voucher students transferred out of the city's public schools. On the contrary, 37 percent already were attending private school without tax-funded vouchers, and another large percentage were just beginning kindergarten. Said one voucher school administrator: "Many of our current choice kids were our students before choice." *Cleveland School Vouchers: Where the Students Come From, Policy Matters Ohio, 2001; The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America's First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000; School Choice in its Tenth Year, Public Policy Forum, April 5, 2000).*



## HOW VOUCHERS HAVE FAILED STUDENTS & TAXPAYERS

Although there are just three publicly-funded voucher programs with about 20,000 students now operating in the United States instances of fraud, safety violations and lack of educational services by voucher schools are both plentiful and shocking. Up to a half-dozen voucher schools have gone out of business, some in the middle of a school year, costing more than 600 students lost education time and taxpayers millions of dollars.

### CLEVELAND

- ✓ The Islamic Academy School of Arts and Sciences knowingly employed a teacher convicted of murder and operated in a dangerous run-down building. The school enrolled 100 students and claimed \$268,000 in taxpayer money. The 110-year-old building had no fire alarm, no sprinkler system, broken windows, lead paint flaking off the walls at dangerous levels, and little, if any, heat in the winter. Academically, two-thirds of the school's teachers were unlicensed, including one who had been convicted of first-degree murder for a bar room shooting. The school's superintendent said she knew of the teacher's murder and drug convictions but was satisfied that he had rehabilitated himself. "I trust him," she said. (*Murderer on Staff of State-Funded Private School, Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 1, 1999*).
- ✓ The Golden Christian Academy, which operated for two years and received \$150,000 for 83 students, relied on education videos as its method of classroom instruction. It also lacked fire safety certificates, student immunization records and tests for lead-based paint. The school's director boasted, "We're the only video school in Cleveland." (*Voucher School Relies on Videos as Teachers, Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 10, 1999*).

### MILWAUKEE

- ✓ The Juanita Virgil Academy went bankrupt and closed in the middle of a school year. Most of the school's 71 students then enrolled in Milwaukee Public Schools. Parents complained about food service, lack of textbooks and materials, overcrowded classrooms and a major lack of discipline. (*The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America's First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000*)
- ✓ Two other Milwaukee voucher schools, enrolling 356 students, closed in the middle of a school year while its principals faced criminal charges. The founder and principal of Exito High School was charged on several criminal counts, including drug charges and embezzling funds. He fled the state, but was later caught, convicted and sent to jail for falsifying enrollment figures to receive more tax dollars from the state. The founder and director of Milwaukee Preparatory was charged with mishandling public funds and fraud. He, too, fled the state, but was arrested in Mississippi. Wisconsin taxpayers paid the two schools an estimated \$390,000 for education services never provided. (*The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America's First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000*)

- ✓ The chief executive officer of Alex's Academic of Excellence was convicted of tax fraud. During his trial, the public learned he also had been convicted of brutally raping a woman at knifepoint and of burglary. When asked if a convicted rapist should be near schoolchildren, the school's principal replied, "Let me get back to you on that one." The judge who presided over the fraud trial said, "It seems that (the voucher program) is easy pickings for people who are not inclined to be honest." (*Voucher Programs Pose Unique Set of Challenges, Education Week, May 17, 2000; Judge Sentences Choice School's CEO, a Convicted Rapist, for Tax Fraud, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 4, 2000*).
- ✓ A former teacher at the Woodson Academy voucher school came within days of receiving \$141,800 (he would have pocketed more than a half million dollars for the entire school year) from the state for his own voucher school, the Sensas-Utcha Institute for Holistic Learning. The man boasts that he speaks 28 languages, can read books simply by laying his hands on them, and has a doctorate in metaphysics from a Minnesota college that advertises its \$199 Ph.D. program online. His application to the state indicated 131 students had applied. He told one parent that children could stay at home and not attend class but he would mark them "present" anyway. The Institute was to operate out of the man's 1903 three-bedroom house that had no heat or electricity, but ultimately failed to open when the city refused to grant him a building occupancy permit. The city permit only became a minimal requirement in 2000 – nine years after the voucher program began. (*Choice School Found to be Empty Promise, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Sept. 22, 2000; State Taking a Harder Line on Milwaukee Choice Schools, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Sept. 20, 2000*).

## FLORIDA

- ✓ Despite a laundry list of problems, the W.J. Redmond Christian Academy in Palm Beach collected \$424,000 in tax money from the state's voucher program for students with disabilities. The state sent voucher checks to five different addresses, including the school owner's home, a motel and an empty church hall. It continued to send voucher checks even though many students' records were incomplete and some were not even qualified to be in the program. The state had trouble locating children who were listed as students in the school, possibly because as many as a third of the students returned to public schools. A grocery store clerk even complained to the state that the school's principal was trying to cash voucher checks. Parents repeatedly told state officials the school had no textbooks and that all the children, from kindergartners to twelfth-graders, were lumped in one classroom. (*Control Limited in State Voucher Program, Sun-Sentinel, Oct. 14, 2001*).
- ✓ The state has sent millions of tax dollars to a management company that operates up to six voucher schools despite numerous complaints from parents, teachers, principals and even the pastor of the church that houses one school. The pastor of Bethel Metropolitan Christian Academy in St. Petersburg was fired as dean of the school when he questioned why students had no textbooks and were not receiving special education services. He says teachers were paid as little as \$10.50 an hour even though the school received up to \$500,000 in tax money. Some students have had seven different teachers in just seven months. Elsewhere, employees and the former executive director of Bellview Junction and S.L. Jones Academy in Pensacola have gone public and notified the Florida Department of Law Enforcement of countless allegations. They include: tax dollars being spent for special education services never

provided; falsifying applications for state funding; employees reprimanded for notifying police of possible child abuse; and parents paid cash by school owners to silence their complaints.

The state Department of Education has not publicly addressed the problems, but the director of its school choice office has testified before Congress on the merits of the program. Under questioning from a House subcommittee, she said she had not heard any complaints.

*(From St. Petersburg Times, "DOE Looks the Other Way," Oct. 7, 2001; "A Voucher Marketplace," April 14, 2002; "An Educational Fraud," Oct. 11, 2001; "Disabled Voucher Program," March 24, 2002; "Parents Rue Their School Choice," Oct. 3, 2001; and from Education Daily, "Florida Voucher Program Raises Concerns Among Democrats," May 10, 2002).*



## KEY FINDINGS OF MAJOR NATIONAL OPINION POLL BY NSBA/ZOGBY INTERNATIONAL

- ◆ **Americans say public money demands public oversight. Vouchers eliminate oversight.**  
Up to 90 percent of Americans expect private schools that accept vouchers to meet many of the same accountability standards as public schools. But voucher programs fail to meet these expectations. These include:
  - 90 percent of all adults and 86 percent of African-Americans expect a private school “to publicly disclose how it spends tax dollars.”
  - 89 percent of all adults and 93 percent of African-Americans expect a private school “to give their students the same state tests as public school students, and report those test results.”
  - 89 percent of all adults and 89 percent of African-Americans expect private school students “to meet the same academic standards” as public school students.
  - 80 percent of all adults and 87 percent of African-Americans expect private schools “to admit all students, regardless of academic or physical abilities.”
- ◆ **Americans oppose draining tax dollars from public schools. Vouchers do this precisely.**  
Nearly 40 percent of Americans who initially said they *supported* vouchers, change their minds if it means the public schools lose tax dollars. Among African-Americans who initially supported vouchers, 57 percent withdraw their support if public schools lose money.
- ◆ **Americans rank vouchers near the bottom in ways to improve public schools.**  
A mere 12 percent of all adults and just 5 percent of African-Americans said vouchers are the way to most improve public schools. Americans prefer their tax dollars be invested to help reduce class sizes and strengthen teacher quality. For example, African-Americans are 7 times as likely to choose smaller class sizes over vouchers as the way to improve public schools.
- ◆ **Among African-Americans, 57 percent oppose vouchers while only 41 percent favor them.** And, 41 percent said they “strongly oppose” vouchers, more than double the 19 percent who “strongly favored” them.
- ◆ **Americans oppose vouchers for students already in private schools.**  
Sixty-one (61) percent of all adults and 74 percent of African-Americans oppose vouchers for students who already attend private schools. In Cleveland, 1 in 3 of the current voucher students attended private schools before receiving a tax-funded voucher.

*Access the entire poll at NSBA’s Voucher Strategy Center web site: [nsba.org/novouchers](http://nsba.org/novouchers).*

*Poll conducted in 2001 by Zogby International, interviewing 1,211 adults.*

*Margin of error for adults is +/- 3 percent; for African-Americans it is +/- 5.7 percent.*



## THE THINGS PEOPLE SAY ABOUT VOUCHERS

### PARENTS OF VOUCHER STUDENTS

- ✓ “They’re using our tax dollars to run a private school that is abusing our children? That doesn’t make sense.” *Michele DeFosse, mother of a fourth-grader who left a St. Petersburg, Fla. voucher school supposed to serve students with disabilities. She filed an abuse complaint with the Pinellas Child Protection Investigative Team and the state Department of Education. When she voiced her concerns at a school open house last October, the school’s headmistress called police to have her removed from school grounds. (Parents Rue Their School Choice, St. Petersburg Times, Oct. 3, 2001).*
- ✓ “I was asking questions – too many questions – as a mother. They told me not to worry about it. But my purpose is not to just house children so she could make money.” *Kimberly Marvin, wife of Bethel Metropolitan pastor Joaquin Marvin, on the management company that runs Bethel Metropolitan Christian School in St. Petersburg, Fla. After removing their children from the school housed in their church, Mrs. Marvin was fired as headmistress and Rev. Marvin was fired as dean. They both had complained about lack of textbooks and special education services. (Parents Rue Their School Choice, St. Petersburg Times, Oct. 3, 2001)*
- ✓ “He doesn’t bring homework home; they don’t have speech therapy at the school.” *Lesley Wise, mother of a seventh-grader who left the Bethel Metropolitan Christian School in St. Petersburg, Fla. and returned to a public school. (Parents Rue Their School Choice, St. Petersburg Times, Oct. 3, 2001)*
- ✓ “When they were losing the teachers, they had the students teaching themselves.” *LaRuth Jackson, who withdrew her first-grade son from the Islamic Academy School of Arts and Sciences in Cleveland, and returned him to public school, where he had to repeat first grade. The tax-funded voucher school operated for two years with unlicensed teachers, including a convicted murderer. (Cleveland Citizens Issue Stern Warning on Vouchers, American Federation of Teachers news report, January 31, 2002, panel discussion in Washington, D.C.)*
- ✓ “After two or three days she came home crying. When I woke her up for school the next day, she cried and said she didn’t want to go. I already received a new application (for the voucher program) for next year. For now, I’m going to throw it in the wastebasket.” *Maysoon Zaghari, an immigrant who removed her 7-year-old daughter, Walaa, from a Cleveland voucher school and enrolled her in a nearby public school. The Zaghari’s are Muslim and the voucher school is Catholic. Walaa said the school forced her to participate in their religious exercises even though it conflicts with her personal religion. The school told Walaa’s father that it was against school policy to excuse students from religion and if the family objected they could remove Walaa from the school. The few Muslim schools that accept vouchers were full or too far from the Zaghari’s home. (Cleveland Families Disagree on Value of School Vouchers, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Feb. 17, 2002; School Vouchers: Court Showdown, Columbus [OH] Dispatch, Feb. 17, 2002).*

- ✓ “I’m extremely dissatisfied with the academic performance of the school, administrator changed . . . without notification to parents, spanking of children, poor quality atmosphere, transferring child back to public school, . . . lack of cooperation from school administration, in regards to curriculum and after school activities – never met registration promises.”  
*(Parent responding to survey by official evaluation team for Milwaukee voucher program; referring to Juanita Virgil Academy, which went bankrupt and closed mid-school year. From: The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America’s First Voucher Program, John F. Witte, 2000)*

#### **PRIVATE SCHOOL OFFICIALS**

- ✓ “It’s wrong what they’re doing. They had no intention of delivering what they promised. It’s people taking advantage of the poor. All I know is the money wasn’t going into the classroom.” *DiAnne Taylor, former principal of Bellview Junction, a Pensacola, Fla. voucher school, speaking about a management company that operates up to six voucher schools and has faced countless complaints. (From St. Petersburg Times: Voucher Complaints Chase Pair, April 7, 2002; A Voucher Marketplace, April 14, 2002).*
- ✓ “If what they’re doing isn’t illegal, it should be. I quit my job for this. Children’s lives are more important than money.” *Ed Anderson, former director of the AJC 2000 Management Company, which operates up to six voucher schools in Florida. He has requested an investigation by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and has sent them documents outlining claims that the voucher schools are charging false tuition amounts and that children were not receiving special education services. (Voucher Complaints Chase Pair, St. Petersburg Times, April 7, 2002; Pensacola Voucher School Workers Fired Amid Spending Questions, Associated Press, March 15, 2002).*
- ✓ “I fear that some are jumping on the bandwagon and figuring on making some easy money.” *Mary Herscher, head of the private DePaul School for Dyslexia in Clearwater, Fla., on the dangers posed by the lack of oversight in the state’s voucher program for students with disabilities. (An Educational Fraud, St. Petersburg Times, Oct. 11, 2001).*

#### **COMMENTS BY ANNETTE “POLLY” WILLIAMS (AUTHOR OF THE LEGISLATION THAT CREATED THE MILWAUKEE VOUCHER PROGRAM)**

- ✓ “We wanted parental choice. They’re talking about school choice. And when you’re talking about school choice, you’re not talking about parents selecting schools, you’re talking about schools selecting parents.” *(Voucher Plan’s Creator Says it Has Become a Monster, Florida Times-Union, March 21, 1999).*
- ✓ “There are members of the choice movement who are about destroying the public schools, who don’t care one bit about poor black children in the inner city.” *(Voucher Plan’s Creator Says it Has Become a Monster, Florida Times-Union, March 21, 1999).*
- ✓ “They find ways of rejecting students. They admit them, then they reject them. They take public dollars, but they don’t want to give up their (rules).” *(Questions Linger Over Vouchers, Sun-Sentinel, May 9, 1999). Article notes that Williams’ office gets frequent complaints from African-American parents who say their children are asked to leave the voucher schools.*



## EDITORIAL PAGES HAVE THEIR SAY ON SCHOOL VOUCHERS

- ✓ “The next state superintendent of public instruction must strive to put some controls on the (voucher) program. Right now, for example, regulations would not stop a convicted murderer or rapist from opening a choice school. Oversight of the money is too lax, and the program lacks measures of academic success.” *“Choices on Choice Schools,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on the Milwaukee voucher program, Jan. 22, 2001.*
- ✓ “It should come as no surprise that there are problems with vouchers for disabled students, given the state’s rush to create the program and its lack of accountability. A Legislature and state bureaucracy that have repeatedly preached public education ‘accountability’ have created a private voucher program for disabled students that simply hands out tax money for the asking.” *“An Educational Fraud,” St. Petersburg Times on Florida’s voucher program, Oct. 11, 2001.*
- ✓ “But that, apparently, is how Florida’s new educational marketplace is supposed to work. Invite students to leave their public schools, point them to places that in some cases have been created for the sole purpose of attracting tax dollars, and then let the families deal with the consequences. Maybe the market will catch up with these schools some day, in the same way the markets ultimately caught up with Enron. In this case though, Florida’s pension fund won’t be the only thing to suffer. So will its public schools and some disillusioned poor and disabled schoolchildren.” *“A Voucher Marketplace,” St. Petersburg Times on Florida’s voucher program, April 14, 2002.*
- ✓ “Accountability, ironically, has been missing from the voucher debate. Florida’s voucher system ... gives taxpayers, whose money is being spent, no opportunity to measure the effectiveness of that expenditure. Milwaukee’s decade-old voucher program doesn’t even require private schools to test its voucher students.” *“Pass on Vouchers,” Orlando Sentinel, Jan. 4, 2001.*
- ✓ “As State Auditor Jim Petro pointed out yesterday, the operation is so poorly managed that unscrupulous leaders of one school easily siphoned away tens of thousands of dollars. And as the *Plain Dealer* revealed last year, the program is so badly monitored that several schools operated in unsafe buildings with unqualified teachers. As the legislature learned two years ago, the program is so poorly directed that it overspent its budget by more than \$1 million. With a record like this, the program’s constitutional mettle becomes less important.” *“Confusion Reigns,” Cleveland Plain Dealer on Cleveland’s voucher program, Jan. 7, 2000.*
- ✓ “It also is worth remembering that public schools educate 90 percent of our children, and are a cornerstone of democracy. Everyone – white and black, Christian and Jew, believer and nonbeliever, rich and poor – gets a desk, a pencil and chance. Where public schools are failing to realize their promise, the answer is fixing the schools, not diverting their resources.” *“Mend the Broken Promise,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Feb. 21, 2002.*

- ✓ “Even if the voucher program were not unconstitutional, however, we would object to it because it drains human and financial resources from public education without solving the real problems facing American education. The vouchers do not encourage better public schools, and they do not sow the seeds for a rich counter-system of private schools. Providing quality education for all America’s children will take a steady, concerted effort, combined with experimentation and a great deal of money. Vouchers are not a solution. They are a distraction.” *“A Matter of Church and State,” New York Times, Feb. 20, 2002.*
- ✓ “Voucher programs do not enhance educational equality. Private and parochial schools are already advantaged over public schools because they need not take all comers. They can refuse children with special needs, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, language difficulties, or who come from abusive homes. Meanwhile, private schools are free of the accountability increasingly – and properly – applied to public schools.” *“No on Vouchers,” The Boston Globe, Feb. 20, 2002.*
- ✓ “Furthermore, the disastrous deregulation of natural gas here in Georgia and of electricity elsewhere, and the collapse of Enron and other companies, should have taught some humility to those who argue that private enterprise and competition are the answer to every problem. In theory, that may be true. But in practice, capitalism produces two or three failures for every stirring success. Tossing students to its cruel efficiencies would be a mistake.” *“Vouchers’ Results are Mixed at Best,” Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Feb. 24, 2002.*
- ✓ “When one gets the same answer to essentially the same test question that many times, even the dullest of students should know the answer. Americans believe in working within the public schools, not in vouchers.” *“Thumbs Down: School Vouchers Take Yet Another Beating,” Houston Chronicle on voucher referenda defeats, Nov. 12, 2000.*
- ✓ “Significantly, the concept of providing government funds or tax credits for private school education has been tested on ballots 10 times in recent years. And 10 times voters have turned the idea down.” *“School Vouchers Have Not Proved Selves,” Omaha World-Herald, Nov. 16, 2000.*
- ✓ “Unproven vouchers ... are a societal dead end.” *“Recess on Vouchers,” Raleigh News and Observer, June 17, 2001.*
- ✓ “Regardless of how the U.S. Supreme Court rules in Cleveland’s case, America has every reason to doubt vouchers’ supposed benefits and to beware their many potential costs.” *“Why Vouchers?” Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 7, 2001.*