



THE GROWING DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICE

The Facts About School Choice



ALLIANCE FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

1660 L Street, NW, Suite 1000 · Washington, D.C. 20036

Phone: (202) 280-1990 · info@allianceforschoolchoice.org · AllianceForSchoolChoice.org

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The Growing Democratic Support For Private School Choice

As was the case in 2006 and 2007, Democrats were instrumental in the majority of school choice legislative victories in 2008.

- In Florida, the \$30 million expansion of the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship program was supported by a majority of African-American legislators, all Hispanic legislators, and one-third of the entire Democratic caucus.
- In Louisiana, the New Orleans voucher program passed through the Democratic House and Senate; the bill's authors in each house were Democrats, and 28 Democratic legislators voted for the bill.
- With the support of Washington, D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty and other prominent Democrats, continued funding of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program was approved by Congress.

Legislative chambers controlled by Democrats that approved school choice bills during the last three years

Democratic House	Democratic Senate
D.C. (U.S. House)	D.C. (U.S. Senate)
Iowa	Iowa
Louisiana	Louisiana
Pennsylvania	Maryland
Rhode Island	New Mexico
	Oklahoma (Tied)
	Rhode Island

Democrats have also been instrumental in states that are considering enacting school choice legislation.

- In Maryland, a Democratic senator sponsored a scholarship tax credit bill, and the Democratic Senate approved it by a margin of nearly 2-to-1.
- In New Jersey, members of the Democratic leadership and key committee chairs are sponsors of scholarship tax credit legislation.
- In New Mexico, Democratic leaders in both houses have now embraced scholarship tax credit legislation.

Party Control in 2008 Victories

State	Legislation	Governor	House	Senate
AZ	Expansion of Corporate School Tuition Organization Tax Credit	Democrat	Republican	Republican
FL	Expansion and Improvement of Corporate Tax Credit (CTC) Scholarship Program	Republican	Republican	Republican
GA	Enactment of Georgia Scholarship Tax Credit Program	Republican	Republican	Republican
LA	Enactment of Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program (New Orleans)	Republican	Democrat	Democrat
PA	Increase # of Eligible Businesses and Contribution Limits for EITC	Democrat	Democrat	Republican
UT	Expansion of Permanent Funding for Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship	Republican	Republican	Republican
D.C.	Extension of Funding for D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program	Republican	Democrat	Democrat

From the Field

Growing Democratic support for private school choice in 2008

“In the last several years, there has been a remarkable rise in Democratic support for vouchers. Democrats have played an important role in more than half of recent school-choice successes. This is an important step forward for the school-choice movement.”

- *National Review*, October 20, 2008¹

“When Florida passed a law in 2001 creating the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program for underprivileged students, all but one Democrat in the state legislature voted against it. Earlier this month, lawmakers extended the program – this time with the help of a full third of Democrats in the Legislature, including 13 of 25 members of the state’s black caucus and every member of the Hispanic caucus.”

- *The Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 2008²

“More than 30,000 children across Pennsylvania are benefiting from EITC scholarships, and countless numbers of children in public schools are benefiting from innovative programs that would have likely have gone unfunded. The EITC has accomplished what many in Pennsylvania have been advocating for years: to get the business community more involved in education. The EITC enables companies to support local nonprofit charities, at a minimal cost, instead of sending their tax dollars to Harrisburg. It’s that simple.”

- *Pennsylvania Democratic State Representative Dwight Evans*³

“It would be hypocritical of me not to recognize that there are other ideas outside the traditional public school system,’ [District of Columbia Mayor Adrian] Fenty told the panel, chaired by Rep. Jose Serrano, D-N.Y. ‘If someone is providing an excellent education to a child of the District of Columbia, they have the support of this administration.’”

- *Washington Examiner*, May 1, 2008⁴

“I have met with some of these children and know that they want to continue this program and benefit from educational opportunities that would otherwise be closed to them.”

- **United States Senator Joseph Lieberman**, Independent Democrat, July 8, 2008.⁵

“‘Every opponent I hear is always talking about monitoring the status quo,’ said [State Representative Austin] Badon-D, New Orleans East’s representative. ‘They always talk about the money. They never say anything about the children and families.’ Badon said the program is all about giving parents the choice to send their children to a quality school. ‘What it will do is it will breed competition and competition is good,’ Badon said.”

- *WWL-TV*, June 5, 2008⁶

“I fundamentally believe that vouchers are simply one part of the entire educational pie. There is no surefire way to educate a child. We’ve seen public schools do a great job (I went to them from kindergarten through college) along with private schools, home schooling, charter schools and even online initiatives. This is the kind of innovation we need, not more efforts to prevent a worthy idea from moving forward.”

- **Roland Martin**, Democratic Analyst, July 18, 2008⁷

Notes

1. Robert Verbruggen, “Pro-Choice,” *National Review*, October 20, 2008.
2. *The Wall Street Journal*, “Democrats for School Choice,” May 19, 2008.
3. Alliance for School Choice
4. *Washington Examiner*, “Norton seeking to end voucher program, May 1, 2008. Quoting D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty testifying before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the reauthorization of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.
5. Joseph Lieberman, letter to The Honorable Richard J. Durbin and The Honorable Sam Brownback of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, July 8, 2008.
6. Paul Murphy, “Opponents protest voucher bill on Capitol steps,” *WWL-TV*, June 05, 2008.
7. Roland S. Martin, “Commentary: McCain right, Obama wrong on school vouchers,” *Creators Syndicate*, July 18, 2008.