

FEBRUARY 13, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MISSTATEMENT OF THE DAY -
EDUCATION AND SCHOOL VOUCHERS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued today's "Bush Administration's Misstatement of the Day" on education and school vouchers.

**During a visit to Archbishop Carroll High School in Washington, D.C., President Bush celebrated *"the nation's first federally funded school voucher program set up in the District of Columbia,"* and added that he *"hopes it will turn into 'change across the country' in education."*
(AP, 2/13/04)**

But according to the National Education Association (NEA):

Teachers, parents, and the general public have long opposed private school tuition vouchers - especially when funds for vouchers compete with funds for overall improvements in America's public schools.

The Educational Case Against Vouchers

- . Student achievement ought to be the driving force behind any education reform initiative. See what research says about the relationship between vouchers and student achievement.**
- . Americans want consistent standards for students. Where vouchers are in place -- Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Florida -- a two-tiered system has been set up that holds students in public and private schools to different standards.**
- . NEA and its affiliates support direct efforts to improve public schools. There is no need to set up new threats to schools for not performing. What is needed is help for the students, teachers, and schools who are struggling.**

The Social Case Against Vouchers

- . A voucher lottery is a terrible way to determine access to an education. True equity means the ability for every child to attend a good school in the neighborhood.**
- . Vouchers were not designed to help low-income children. Milton Friedman, the "grandfather" of vouchers, dismissed the notion that vouchers could help low-income families, saying "it is essential that no conditions be attached to the acceptance of**

vouchers that interfere with the freedom of private enterprises to experiment."□

. A pure voucher system would only encourage economic, racial, ethnic, and religious stratification in our society. America's success has been built on our ability to unify our diverse populations.□

The Legal Case Against Vouchers

. About 85 percent of private schools are religious. Vouchers tend to be a means of circumventing the Constitutional prohibitions against subsidizing religious practice and instruction.□

The Political Landscape

. Each year, about \$65 million dollars is spent by foundations and individuals to promote vouchers. In election years, voucher advocates spend even more on ballot measures and in support of pro-voucher candidates.□

. In the words of political strategist, Grover Norquist, "We win just by debating school choice, because the alternative is to discuss the need to spend more money..."□

. Despite desperate efforts to make the voucher debate about "school choice" and improving opportunities for low-income students, vouchers remain an elitist strategy. From Milton Friedman's first proposals, through the tuition tax credit proposals of Ronald Reagan, through the voucher proposals on ballots in California, Colorado, and elsewhere, privatization strategies are about subsidizing tuition for students in private schools, not expanding opportunities for low-income children.