

# THE CASE AGAINST SCHOOL VOUCHERS

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# Today's Agenda

- The big picture
- National landscape
- Recent doubts by voucher backers
- Universal vouchers?
- Key messages / rebuttals
- Georgia on their mind



# The Big Picture: National Trends

- Voucher concept 53 years old
- Public still not sold on idea
- 6 years since “landmark” Supreme Court ruling
- Funding of statehouse candidates



# The Big Picture: National Trends

- More expansion than creation
- Targeted programs / more tax credits
- Florida's flagship program ended
- Searching for the next flagship?
- Voucher "thinkers" raising doubts



# Current Programs

Vouchers	Tax Subsidies
Arizona (2)	Arizona (2)
Cleveland	Florida
Florida	Georgia
Georgia	Illinois
Milwaukee	Iowa
New Orleans	Louisiana
Ohio (2)	Minnesota
Utah	Pennsylvania
Washington, DC	Rhode Island



# Milwaukee Vouchers

- Nation's oldest program (started 1990)
- About 19,000 students
- Vouchers = \$6,501 per student
- Cost 2007-08: \$120 million (partial diversion city public schools)
- Academic evaluations ended mid-1990s / Recently resurrected



# Cleveland Vouchers

- Started 1995
- About 6,300 students
- Vouchers = up to \$3,450
- Diverts up to \$19 million from Cleveland public school fund
- Evaluations found no academic differences; African-American and low-income kids underrepresented



# Florida Vouchers

- McKay special education voucher
- About 19,000 students
- Vouchers = \$7,206 avg.
- Cost 2006-07: \$119 million
- IDEA rights relinquished
- Private schools maintain admissions
- No academic evaluations



# Ohio Vouchers

- Started 2006-07 school year
- About 10,000 students / 14K cap
- Vouchers = \$4,375 - \$5,150
- Cost: \$43.7 million estimated
- “Academic emergency” schools trigger
- Private schools maintain admissions standards

# Small, Targeted Vouchers

- Vouchers for autistic children: **Ohio**
- Special education: **Georgia & Utah**
- **Arizona**: special education and foster children (\$5 million total)



# Shifting Strategies



New Rationale: Vouchers will *help* public schools

# Sen. Johnson on vouchers

- “This is really more about improving public schools than giving vouchers to private schools.”
  - State Senator Eric Johnson, *Gainesville Times*, Sept. 18, 2008



# Sen. Johnson on vouchers

- “If we offer every parent the freedom to choose the best school and allow the funding to follow each child to their chosen school, Georgia will skyrocket to the top of every educational measurement.”

TheAtlanta  
Journal-  
Constitution  
ajc.com

- State Sen. Eric Johnson op-ed to *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Sept. 29, 2008

# They said it



- Voucher advocates raise newfound doubts on impact on public schools
- “But sadly...the evidence is pretty meager that competition from vouchers is making public schools better.”
  - Sol Stern, *City Journal*, Winter 2008

# “Hasn’t worked”



- “The reality is that it hasn’t worked like we thought it would in theory.”
- “I don’t think anyone that is truthful can say that has occurred.”

- Dr. Howard Fuller, founder of BAEO, to *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 13, 2005

# “Oversold that point”



- “I’m one of those people who believes that we may have oversold that point.”
- “I think that any honest assessment would have to say there hasn’t been the deep, wholesale improvement in MPS that we would have thought.”

- Dr. Howard Fuller, founder of BAEO, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Oct. 24, 2007

# Doubts, continued



- “Today, the Milwaukee voucher program enrolls nearly 20,000 students in more than 100 schools, yet this growing marketplace has yielded little innovation or excellence.”

- Frederick Hess, American Enterprise Institute,  
*Education Outlook*, September 2008

# Hess, continued



- “There is little evidence that voucher or choice programs have succeeded in fostering the emergence or expansion of high-quality options.”

- Frederick Hess, American Enterprise Institute,  
*Education Outlook*, September 2008

# No link to “voucher effect”



- No sustained improvements in Milwaukee
- Early gains reversed
- Public school performance declined as voucher program expanded
- Lowest income schools “lost ground”
- No positive effect based on voucher school proximity

- Economic Policy Institute, October 2007

# Universal vouchers

- Targeted programs: means to an end for many voucher advocates
  - “A program for the poor will be a poor program.”
    - Milton Friedman, father of voucher movement
- Education Week, Dec. 12, 2001



# Universal vouchers

- None currently exist / few even proposed
- Utah enacted phased-in universal program in 2007
  - Repealed by voters in 2007: 62% - 38%



# Key Questions: Universal Vouchers



- Will program prohibit existing private school students from participating?
  - Legal and political realities
- How many entering kindergartners / first graders would have been private school students anyway?

# Key Questions: Universal Vouchers

- What will be the total cost to taxpayers?
- How extensive will the public accountability requirements (“strings”) be for private schools?



# Lessons Learned: Trouble with Vouchers



- Drain dollars from public schools
- Eliminate public accountability
- Don't raise student achievement

# Lessons Learned: Trouble with Vouchers

- Waste taxpayer dollars
- Leave many students behind
- Undermine unifying/common culture benefit of public education



# Vouchers Drain Dollars from Public Schools

- Florida: \$119 million in 2006-07



- *“Because voucher payments reduce funding for the public education system, the [voucher program] by its very nature undermines the system of ‘high quality’ free public schools...”*
  - Florida Supreme Court (*Bush v. Holmes*)

# Cleveland vouchers would otherwise fund what public school programs?

- **Preschool?**
- **All-day kindergarten?**
- **Smaller class sizes?**
- **Reading improvement programs?**



# Voucher money diverted from?

- All 4 programs
  - Cleveland's Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid Fund takes the hit from voucher money



# Vouchers Eliminate Public Accountability

## Public Schools vs. Voucher Schools

Taxpayer Dollars	Yes
NCLB Testing	No
AYP	No
Highly Qualified Teachers	No
Report academic scores	No
Open meetings / records	No
Accept all students	No
Provide IDEA	No

# Lack of Accountability: Florida Vouchers



- Florida Supreme Court cites in decision:
  - State has no oversight
  - Uncredentialed teachers / no college degrees
  - No background checks
  - Curriculum not based on state standards

# Lack of Accountability: Florida Vouchers



- Tampa voucher school named in federal terrorism indictment: received \$350,000
- Non-profit stole \$268,000 in voucher money; gave out NO vouchers to students
- 7 employees at voucher school defrauded taxpayers of \$50,000 to buy a Hummer SUV, satellite TV and comedy show tickets

# True or False: Milwaukee Voucher School?



- Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

# True: Lasted 5 years

- Multiple evictions
- Unpaid teachers
- Unpaid bus companies
- Founder a convicted rapist
- Received \$2.8 million in taxpayer dollars



# Lack of Accountability: Milwaukee

- Voucher school closed mid school year
- Founder cashed \$330,000 for fictitious students
- Bought 2 Mercedes-Benz with the money
- Founder: “Becoming a choice school is real simple. I’m shocked. Me and you, in about two hours, we can basically open a choice school.”



# Vouchers No Way to Raise Student Achievement



- **GAO:** Official evaluations find no overall differences despite private schools' built-in advantages
- **GAO:** Critical of research conducted by voucher “researchers”

# Vouchers No Way to Raise Student Achievement

- Cleveland: Students in start-up voucher schools scored lower than public school peers in all subjects
- Cleveland: Public school students made larger gains



# New research / same story

- Washington, D.C. voucher program:  
2 years, no significant differences



- Revived Milwaukee evaluation: no overall differences, “relative parity”
- No miracle ticket to a better education

# Who Benefits?



## True or False?

- Former public school students received most of Cleveland's vouchers

**FALSE**


- Only 21 percent of Cleveland's voucher students ever attended public school
- 33 percent already attended private school
- 46 percent just starting kindergarten

# Vouchers Waste Taxpayer Dollars




- Fund 2 systems: 1 public, 1 private
- Cleveland report: Only 1 in 5 voucher students from public schools
- Milwaukee: taxpayers fund tuition for 2 in 3 private school students

# What You'll Hear – Debunking the Myths




- **Myth:** Vouchers will *improve* the public schools via competition
- **Fact:** Evidence has discounted this
- **Fact:** Loss of students is scattered
- **Fact:** Uneven playing field; private schools don't take all students

# What You'll Hear – Debunking the Myths



- **Myth:** Vouchers give poor families the *same choice* as wealthy families
- **Fact:** Private schools can opt out
- **Fact:** Private schools can limit seats
- **Fact:** Private schools can screen students

# What You'll Hear – Debunking the Myths




- **Myth:** Vouchers *increase* accountability because of parents
- **Fact:** Parental accountability does not equal public accountability
- **Fact:** Scandals have persisted
- **Fact:** Marketplace theory not enough

# What You'll Hear – Debunking the Myths

- Myth: Vouchers will *save* public schools money
- Fact: Diverts resources but not fixed costs
- Fact: Ignores vouchers to students already in private schools



# What You'll Hear – Debunking the Myths



- **Myth:** Minority support for vouchers is high
- **Fact:** Minorities voted overwhelmingly *against* actual voucher plans
- **Fact:** Minorities prefer other strategies to improve public schools even more than overall public

# Making Georgia a battleground?

- “All Children Matter” PAC



“There’s a new gunslinger in town.”

- Clint Bolick

Alliance for School Choice / Institute for Justice

# “All Children Matter” PAC



- Founded by Dick and Betsy DeVos
- Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Pushed 2000 Mich. voucher referendum
- It lost 69%-31%; failed in every county
- Bankrolling candidates and campaigns in multiple states

# PAC \$\$ funding candidates

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- ✓ Arizona
- ✓ Colorado
- ✓ Florida
- ✓ Georgia
- ✓ Indiana
- ✓ Iowa
- ✓ Louisiana
- ✓ Missouri
- ✓ New Hampshire
- ✓ Ohio
- ✓ South Carolina
- ✓ Texas
- ✓ Utah
- ✓ Washington
- ✓ Wisconsin

# Lessons From the States – Your Actions

- Build coalition beyond education: business, community, religious, parents
- Public awareness campaign is crucial and must be ongoing
- Stay informed on the issue – GSBA & NSBA are resources for you

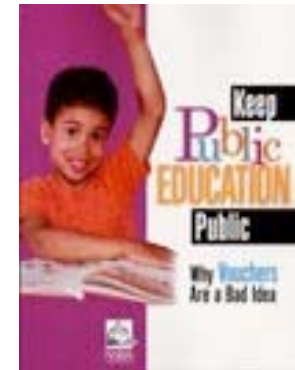


***GSBA***

# NSBA Voucher Strategy Center



- Voucher Strategy Center website:  
[www.nsba.org/novouchers](http://www.nsba.org/novouchers)
- Toolkit – “Keep Public Education Public: Why Vouchers are a Bad Idea”



# Thank You GSBA!

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**NSBA**

*Excellence and  
Equity in Public  
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through School  
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