



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES II

School Vouchers

By Katie Sylvan

Introduction

Secondary school education in the United States is of major concern to parents, students, educators, and lawmakers. There has been much debate concerning the quality of the nation's system of education and the best way to improve it. Public education has traditionally been funded by tax dollars. Many people, however, choose to send their children to private or **parochial schools** at their personal expense. Many Americans favor school choice, a system whereby parents have a choice as to where to send their children to school. One of the issues related to the school choice debate that has arisen repeatedly in recent years is that of school vouchers, a system whereby parents are given a voucher that serves as a subsidy for tuition to be paid to particular school, whether it be public or private. Thus, under a school voucher system, both public and private schools are supported by tax dollars, and parents, rather than being forced to send their children to neighborhood schools, have a choice as to which school their children will attend.

parochial school—a school that provides religious education in addition to conventional education.

Much has been written about this subject, and numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate the effects of a school voucher program. There are a number of central questions regarding school vouchers. Do they work? Do students who participate in school voucher programs perform better academically? Do public schools suffer financially as a result of school voucher programs? Do public schools suffer due to the best students being “skimmed” off the top to participate in voucher programs? Do school vouchers lead to greater inequality and segregation of schools, or do they in fact lead to greater equality?

Explanation of the Problem

History of the Problem

Development of Public Education the U.S.

There has been a longstanding problem in the United States regarding differences in high school graduation rates and standardized test scores between white and African-American students as well as between white and Hispanic students. The reasons for this “achievement gap” have been studied extensively, and one of the main contributors to this problem is the relationship between education and income. While racial segregation was outlawed in the U.S. many years ago, there is **de facto segregation** in many schools resulting from the fact that people with

de facto segregation—segregation in daily life resulting from various economic, social, and cultural forces despite the existence of laws or regulations explicitly banning such segregation.



enough money often choose to move to areas where the schools are better. This desire for high-quality school systems has been a driving factor in the rapid growth of suburbs in recent decades, leaving those without the financial resources to move to more expensive residential areas to attend inner city schools that are, on average, of lower quality than their suburban counterparts.

There are not many things that are required of most Americans, but one requirement that every American must meet is to send his or her children to school. While many Americans value and demand freedom of choice in their lives, as far as public schools are concerned, most Americans do not have a broad degree of choice for the most part. Most students attend the public school closest to where they live. Students typically have an opportunity to choose which university they want to attend, but this freedom of choice does not extend to the vast majority of public school students who attend the nation's elementary and secondary schools.

Benjamin Rush was an early advocate of public education and he proposed that “free, public” schools, funded in part by parents, be established so that “children of the same religious sect and nation may be educated as much as possible together.” Thomas Paine, in *The Rights of Man*, proposed **compulsory**, publicly financed education, but also recommended vouchers so that parents would have a choice as to which schools their children would attend. State-funded schools in Connecticut were still charging tuition as late as the 1830s. Only in the 1840s did it become standard for public schools to be state-funded and state-operated. Horace Mann, the Massachusetts Secretary of Education, is usually credited with founding public education in the United States as it is known today. A key feature of the system was locally elected school boards whose only mission was to promote public education. The US public educational system soon became the world's largest.

compulsory—*required by law or a rule.*

Americans started to establish private schools as early as the colonial period. These private schools were initially boarding schools founded by Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians to initiate young men into the ministry. Some of these private schools went on to become Ivy League colleges while others became exclusive secondary schools. The major expansion of private schools occurred in the mid-19th century when Catholics decided to establish their own system of education in response to what they considered to be a Protestant-dominated public school system.

John Dewey, an influential philosopher and education reformer, said that although the state was constrained by “tendencies which split society into classes,” public schools could “balance the various elements in the social environment and see to it that each individual received an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born.” Dewey believed that the government should run schools

in order to limit social and economic inequalities.

The Beginnings of School Choice

As public schools became more centralized, many began to criticize the education system because there were not enough opportunities for individual choice in terms of deciding which school a student wanted to attend. As an outgrowth of this criticism, public school systems began to offer magnet schools, charter schools, inter-district public schools, and tax credits for private education.

One of the results of desegregation was mandatory **busing** of students in an attempt to integrate schools. However, this was extremely unpopular with many people, and the magnet school was developed as a different method of increasing racial integration of schools. Families were enticed to choose an integrated magnet school by offering better educational programs at those schools. By 1984, magnet schools began to have a significant impact on education when federal funding of magnet schools was created under the Magnet Schools Assistance Program. Under the magnet school program, families were permitted to select any public school in their district as long as space was available in that school. The program was expanded in Minnesota in 1985 to allow families to choose schools outside of their district, and over the next decade, sixteen more states followed the lead of Minnesota in this regard. Preliminary evidence indicates that the school districts losing students to other districts made significant efforts to upgrade their schools in order to keep students in their district.

busing—transporting a child of one race to a school where another race is predominant in an attempt to promote

Magnet schools, while offering a greater degree of choice, are still limited to schools operated by school boards. In an effort to allow even greater choice, charter schools were created. These schools are government-financed, but they are operated by nongovernmental agencies. By the year 2000, thirty-four states and the District of Columbia had enacted charter school legislation and more than 400,000 students were attending charter schools.

The Origin of School Vouchers

In the nineteenth century, English philosopher John Stuart Mill proposed a school voucher program. He supported compulsory, publicly funded education but he believed that the family ultimately had the right to decide which school its child should attend.

One hundred years later, Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman said “governments could finance education by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on approved educational services.” Unfortunately, in the 1950s and 1960s, the voucher concept was largely supported by white Southerners who wanted to use this idea to remove their children from integrated public schools and place them in white private schools. This was

seen as a segregationist tool and as a result, the voucher concept did not gain widespread acceptance at that time.

In the 1990s, two scholars from the Brookings Institute, John Chubbs and Terry Moe, again began to promote school choice. Their premise was that the problems and failures associated with public education were derived from the system's connection to politics. They believed that schools perform best when they have a well-defined mission as well as the **autonomy** and flexibility to pursue that mission. They thought that schools, like businesses, would perform best when driven by a need to satisfy consumers. Under a voucher program, parents can choose the school that best suits the needs of their child, and schools will compete with one another to improve their services in order to meet consumer demand.

autonomy—*freedom from external control or influence.*

Another argument in favor of school vouchers was the “social capital theory.” Social capital is considered to be the resources of a community that are generated by the routine interactions of the people of that community. This can be seen in small American towns where people, both young and old, interact with each other every day in shops, churches and community activities. In these towns, schools had close connections to parents, and students benefitted from these close interactions. Social capital becomes an important resource for all services that require cooperation between government and citizens, including schools, police force, sanitation, etc.

In recent years, social capital has been depleted as society has become more impersonal and people have become more and more isolated from one another. This has led to increased levels of distrust as well as dissatisfaction with government, especially when services depend upon the mutual cooperation of the government and citizens. The depletion of social capital has had significant effects upon schools, as both urban neighborhoods and the suburbs have become increasingly anonymous and schools have become disconnected from the people in the neighborhood. An argument in favor of school choice and school vouchers is that as families choose a particular school, they share a common interest that will increase the school's social capital as a result of the continuing interaction between the parents and children involved with that school. In fact, the term “social capital” arose out of a study that demonstrated better performance of Catholic school students as a result of the interactions of parents at religious services, meetings, and fundraising events, even though these activities themselves had no educational content for the students.

The debate over school choice and school vouchers continues today. While some passionately believe that school vouchers will encourage racial and ethnic separation, others believe a voucher program is the best way to achieve equal educational opportunities. The reality is that school choice does exist in the United States, but it is based largely

on residential selection. Americans simply change residences in order to get what they want in terms of school choice. Therefore, school vouchers may in fact promote choice and provide new educational opportunities for those families with the least ability to exercise school choice under the current system.

Do School Vouchers Work?

One of the real problems surrounding the issue of school vouchers is determining whether or not such a program works and identifying those who truly benefit from such a program. A randomized **field trial** is necessary in order to make these determinations, and several have been conducted in recent years. It also has to be established whether school vouchers are good for everyone, or whether there may be select groups that derive the most benefit from them.

field trial—*a test or experiment carried out in the environment or setting in which a policy or reform effort is to be implemented.*

The first state-funded school voucher program in the US began in Milwaukee in 1990. Behind this program was a rather unlikely alliance of Republican officials and black city leaders. The Republican governor had introduced several voucher proposals to the state legislature, but these failed due to strong opposition by teachers unions. Black leaders in Milwaukee wanted a separate school district for inner-city neighborhoods, but the teachers unions also blocked this plan. As a result of these failed efforts, the governor joined forces with black leaders in the state, and the newfound allies were able to establish a very limited program that allowed low-income families to receive vouchers that could be used at private, secular schools. The program was very restricted, and after six years only 1,600 voucher students attending twenty private schools were enrolled in the program.

The program was expanded in 1996, lifting various restrictions and increasing the number of eligible participants. The program was also opened up to include religious schools, which led to the program being challenged in court. In 1998, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the expanded program was constitutional, and the United States Supreme Court upheld the decision was upheld later that year. By 2000, 10,000 voucher students were attending 100 private schools in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee program is the only publicly funded program that has been evaluated as a randomized field trial.

In March 2011, the Foundation for Educational Choice published an analysis of ten randomized trials that evaluated the outcome from school voucher programs, looking at the academic benefits to the student, the effect on public schools, and parental satisfaction. These ten studies used random assignment, which is the gold standard of social science, to examine how vouchers affect participants. Nine of the ten studies found that school vouchers improve student performance. Six of these found improved performance in all students, three found improvement in some students, and one found no visible impact. Not one of the

studies found a negative impact.

Nineteen **empirical studies** examined how vouchers affect public schools. Of these, 18 found that vouchers improve public schools and one found no visible impact. None of these studies found that vouchers harm public schools.

According to the authors, voucher programs have historically improved public schools financially. When students leave public schools using vouchers, not all of the funding for those students goes with them. Public schools are left with more money per student to serve the students that remain.

The most important reason that vouchers would improve public schools is that they allow parents to hold schools accountable for performance. Under the current system, if a school is bad, the only way to attend a better school is to send a child to a private school or move to a new school district. Neither of these alternatives is usually available for low-income families. In the absence of parental choice, schools lack the incentive to improve their performance, an incentive that drives most other businesses in society. Business are compelled to provide high-quality services or lose their customers, and many education reforms believe this principle should be extended to the nation's education system as well.

In addition to the measurements of academic success, parental satisfaction is consistently higher when education is delivered through school choice in every study that has evaluated this fact.

Finally, the authors of these studies state that, "The size of the voucher effect is often moderate, but a moderate effect is still a positive effect. Claims that vouchers 'don't work' directly contradict a clear consensus in the scientific evidence." The authors go on to say that it is not surprising that the benefits are moderate, since the programs themselves are modest, with most being strictly limited as to the number of students who may participate, the resources that can be provided, and the degree of innovation that is permitted. They believe that only a universal voucher system could deliver the kind of dramatic results that are needed in the nation's education system.

empirical study—an experiment based on, concerned with, or verifiable by measurable observations or experiences.

Congressional Action and Recent Developments

HR 471, Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act

On March 30, 2011, the House of Representatives passed HR 471, a resolution to reestablish a voucher program that allows low-income students in Washington, DC to attend private schools. The bill authorizes the Secretary of Education to award five-year grants on a competitive basis to nonprofit organizations to carry out a program of

expanded school choice to students from low-income families who are District of Columbia residents. The bill further requires the mayor of DC to meet specified requirements to improve public school education and to improve and expand the quality of public charter schools. The organizations opposing HR 471 include the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Education Association, and Americans United for Separation of Church and State while those supporting the bill include the American Federation for Children, the National Taxpayer's Union, the Black Alliance for Educational Options, and the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options.

State-Level Reforms

On May 5, 2011, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels (R) signed the nation's largest school voucher program into law. The School Scholarship Act (House Bill 1003) has the broadest eligibility of any school voucher program in the United States. Gov. Daniels has been an outspoken advocate of school choice. In his 2011 State of the State address he said, "We must begin to honor the parents of Indiana. We must trust them, and respect them enough to decide when, where and how their children can receive the best education, and therefore the best chance in life...we should let these families apply the dollars that the state spends on their child to the non-government school of their choice."

On July 1, 2011, a lawsuit was filed by teachers, school administrators and clergy in Indiana to block the Indiana school voucher program on the day it took effect. The lawsuit seeks a preliminary **injunction** on the grounds that most of the 352 private schools whose students are eligible for the vouchers are affiliated with churches or other religious institutions.

In Pennsylvania, Senate Bill 1, a school voucher bill that is supported by Republican Governor Tom Corbett, cleared a key legislative committee but still faces significant opposition. The bill allows qualifying low-income families to receive vouchers equal to the amount of per-student state aid to be used towards the cost of education at private or parochial schools. The original bill has been amended to include vouchers for middle-class families, which has generated even more opposition to the bill. Opponents of the bill believe that many of the vouchers will be used for students already enrolled in private schools and will simply serve to subsidize the cost to those families.

In April 2011, the Tennessee Senate voted in favor of a school voucher bill for low-income families, but the House version of the bill went to a summer study committee that essentially killed the bill for at least a year.

Overall, eleven states as well as the US Congress passed school choice legislation in the first half of 2011, including the creation of seven new programs in Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Ohio, Oklahoma,

injunction—a judicial order that restrains a person or entity from beginning or continuing an action that allegedly threatens or invades the legal rights of another.

North Carolina and Wisconsin. Four of these are school voucher programs, two are new tax credit programs, and one is the nation's first education savings account program, the latter of which will benefit children with special needs in particular.

Focus of Debate

Conservative View

For the most part, conservatives are in support of school vouchers. Voting generally goes along party lines, and the Republicans usually vote in favor of school voucher legislation. Conservative talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh are strongly in support of school choice, including school vouchers. While conservatives argue in support of school vouchers as a mechanism to provide inner-city students and students from low-income families in particular with an opportunity to attend private schools, the existing voucher programs have impacted only a relatively small number of students. Conservatives would like to see school voucher programs expanded. Ultimately, conservatives and libertarians favor less government and more individual choice, and they want Americans to be able to send their children to whatever school they deem most appropriate, be it public, private, or parochial.

Liberal View

Liberals as a group are generally opposed to school vouchers. Democrats tend to vote in opposition to bills advocating school vouchers. Democrats do not necessarily oppose school choice, and they may support charter schools, even though such schools are run by non-governmental agencies. Liberals believe that school voucher programs damage public schools by funneling money away from public schools and that the focus within education should instead be on the improvement of public schools. In addition, liberals are opposed to the use of public funds to send children to private schools, and they are particularly opposed to using public funds to pay for children to attend religious schools. Much of the battle over school voucher programs centers on the question of the **separation of church and state** and whether the use of public funding for parochial schools is constitutional. However, as seven states have recently passed school choice legislation, it is evident that there is at least some bipartisan support for school choice, with Democrats in some states supporting and even sponsoring school voucher legislation.

separation of church and state—the legal and constitutional principle requiring a separation or distance between organized religion and the nation state.

Presidential View

In March 2011, President Obama stated that he was “strongly opposed” to HR 471, a measure introduced by House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) that would allot \$100 million per year over the next

five years to restart and expand the school voucher program in the District of Columbia. The administration released an official policy statement through the White House Office of Management and Budget saying, “the Administration opposes the creation or expansion of private school voucher programs that are authorized by the bill.” It goes on to say that “private school vouchers are not an effective way to improve student achievement,” and that “the Administration opposes targeting resources to help a small number of individuals attend private schools rather than creating access to great public schools for every child.” The President ultimately took a compromise position, saying that the 1,700 students already enrolled in the program could continue, but that no new students should be admitted into the program.

Interest Group Perspectives

Cato Institute

The Cato Institute is a libertarian think tank that supports the idea of school choice. However, even within this libertarian organization, there is significant debate on the subject. While there is agreement that education should not be controlled by the government and that school and state should be separated in the same way that church and state are separated, some libertarians believe that school vouchers could lead to greater government control over private schools. This contingent calls for simultaneously ending public funding and public provision of schooling.

In 1955, Milton Friedman, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, initially proposed ending the socialist model of schooling by giving parents tax-financed certificates or vouchers to pay tuition at the schools, public or private, to which they chose to send their children. Three years later, Virgil Blum, a Catholic priest and academic, published a book endorsing school vouchers and tax credits. He called for an end to **socialism** in education on libertarian grounds and wrote: “Government control over the processes of education is infinitely more objectionable than government control of businesses which supply the physical needs of life. If forced to choose between two so great evils as government control, on the one hand, of the kind and quality of food one must eat and on the other hand, of the kind and quality of thoughts one must think, surely no American with a sense of the importance of freedom of thought would hesitate in making this choice. Freedom can survive, to a considerable degree, even if government tells the citizen what brand of food he must eat and what fashion of clothes he must wear. But freedom cannot long survive when the government tells him what thoughts he must think.” The Cato Institute also supports the ideas and policies proposed by Friedman and Blum.

socialism—a political and economic theory of social organization that advocates that the means of production and exchange should be regulated by the government or the community as a whole.

Hoover Institute

The Hoover Institute is a think tank at Stanford University that supports the principals of individual, economic, and political freedom, private enterprise, and representative government. The Institute's goal is to constantly point the road to peace, personal freedom, and to the safeguards of the American system. Paul T. Hill, a member of the Institute, addressed the issue of public education, including a discussion on school vouchers, in a chapter titled "What is Public About Public Education?" He argues that America's commitment to public education is stronger than ever, and that reforms like school vouchers, charter schools, private scholarship programs, and schools run by for-profit companies are not a threat to public education. On the contrary, these reforms show a commitment to universal education and a willingness to disrupt existing institutions and allow for change. He goes on to say that voucher programs and charter schools by themselves are neither good nor bad. He says, "Their value, or lack of it, comes from the purpose they serve. Schooling institutions that educate children effectively and prepare them for full participation in a democratic society have great value. Institutions that do not fulfill that purpose have little or no value." He goes on to say "That is why I argue that current efforts to experiment and create options for children, going under many names from vouchers to charters and school contracting, are signs of the health of our national commitment to public education, not threats to it."

The Brookings Institute

The Brookings Institute is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C. whose mission is to conduct high-quality research and provide practical recommendations that advance three goals: strengthening American democracy, fostering the economic and social welfare, security, and opportunity for all Americans, and securing a more open, safe, prosperous and cooperative international system. A 2010 report on choice in elementary and secondary education from the Brookings Institute stated that education choices exercise a powerful pull on parents of school children. According to the report, 24% of parents moved to their current neighborhood so their children could attend a particular school. Fifteen percent of public school students attend parent-selected rather than district-assigned schools. The charter school and **homeschooling** sectors have grown from zero to 2.6% and 3% of total enrollment respectively. Eleven percent of students attend private schools. Finally, virtual schools are felt to be poised for explosive growth. Schools of choice consistently generate more positive evaluations from parents than do assigned schools.

The Brookings Institute believes that the reality is very different from the idealized situation on both sides of the argument concerning

homeschooling—the education of children at home by their parents.

schools vouchers. They recognize that for the foreseeable future, the quality of schools will be significantly correlated with geography and parental income. They see choice most frequently realized within the public sector using mechanisms of residence, magnet schools, and open enrollment systems, with school vouchers, in reality, being rare. They believe that the real situation with respect to school choice requires a new and different perspective on policy. Their policy recommendations are framed within the realities of the large variation in the quality of public schools, widespread selection of schools by choice of place of residence, and choice being exercised predominantly within the public sector. The Institute's recommendations include: increased parental options, open admission into particular schools within the choice system, selection into oversubscribed schools by lottery (with weighting to enhance socioeconomic and geographic balance), no default within choice systems (all parents must choose), a policy in which all schools supported by public funds within a choice system must be subject to the same standards as traditional public schools within the state, policies in which the popularity of schools based upon parental preferences be reflected in greater funding of those schools to allow increased enrollment, and that substantially undersubscribed schools be restructured or closed.

Brookings does not advocate any particular type of education program. They believe school choice should be a democratic process that benefits from the informed participation of parents. They believe that their recommendations are suitable to a range of school systems, from a district with no choices other than district-run public schools, to those with charter schools, to those with traditional and virtual schools, to a voucher-based system.

Possible Solutions

Despite Milton Friedman's original concept of school vouchers that he introduced in 1955, no program has ever been tried in the way that he envisioned, and while school voucher programs do exist in limited forms in a number of states, it is unlikely that vouchers will be the answer to the problem of school choice. Vouchers are currently used by only a very small minority of students in the United States, and vouchers themselves remain a very **polarizing** issue. The advocates and opponents of school vouchers feel equally passionate about them, and there is little middle ground. Liberals are strongly opposed to vouchers, more because of their use of public funds for religious schools than for any other reason. They argue that public schools will suffer as a result of the movement of some students to private schools and that funds for public schools will decrease, but the issue of separation of church and state is their overriding concern. Any solution to the problem of school choice

polarizing—capable of creating two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs.

will have to maintain the separation of church and state.

The supporters of school vouchers want the right to choose where and how their children are educated, and while they express their concern for the rights of children from low-income areas to have access to the same private schools as all other children via a voucher system, they are driven mainly by the desire to control where their own children go to school, be it public, private or parochial. Any solution to the problem will have to address this issue.

How can this be resolved? How can the liberals refuse to allow public funds to be used for education that may be religious in nature and at the same time how can conservatives be allowed to choose which schools their children attend, regardless of whether it is a parochial school?

Abandon School Vouchers

One solution to this problem would be to abandon school voucher programs and admit that these programs will not work in a polarized society such as the United States. This will satisfy the liberals in that their tax dollars would not be supporting parochial schools. At the same time, states could change tax laws and allow tax credits for families earning less than a specified amount of money to be used to send their children to private or parochial schools. While the liberals will argue vehemently against this, it should be less offensive to them than directly giving a family a voucher to send a child to parochial school. The conservatives and libertarians will not like this because it limits the tax credit to families under a certain income level. But this will allow low-income families to have some choice as to where to send their children to school and at the same time will maintain the majority of tax dollars now available to support public schools.

Fully Adopt School Vouchers

Another possibility would be to fully adopt a school voucher program as it was originally envisioned by Milton Friedman, with the difference being that vouchers would not be able to be used for parochial schools. This would obviously result in a great deal of anger on the part of the large number of families who choose to send their children to parochial schools, but there really is not another satisfactory way to deal with the volatile issue of the separation of church and state. In order to be fair to those who decide to use parochial schools, those families who do so could have their local and state taxes reduced by the amount that they would be paying for public school education. This would reduce the total amount of money available for public education proportionate to the number of students who would not be using the system. Either this amount of money would have to suffice, or there would have to be a small increase in taxes for education for the remainder of

the population. Once a family's children were no longer in parochial school, that family would have to pay the taxes for education like everyone else.

Eliminate School Vouchers and Privatize Schools

A third possible solution would be to privatize education. Government **bureaucracies** almost never function efficiently, and it is extremely difficult to replace government employees who are not functioning at a high enough level of performance. School choice could be optimized through the use of magnet schools, charter schools, and virtual schools, employing many of the suggestions of the Brookings Institute that would guarantee that all schools would be open to all students and that a lottery system be used for oversubscribed schools. The goal would be to foster competition between schools by giving monetary rewards to teachers and administrators who excel and replacing poorly performing teachers and administrators. The government would still be involved to the extent of setting requirements and standards, but beyond that, the schools would be run privately, much like how charter schools currently function. People who choose to opt out of this system and send their children to private or parochial schools would still have to pay for this as they currently do.

b u r e a u c r a c y —
government entities administered by appointed state officials rather than elected representatives.

Questions a Bill Should Address

A bill related to school vouchers and school choice should address the issue of the use of public funds for educational choices outside of the normal public school system as well as which options will be available for parents. This should include regulations that will specify whether children can attend private or parochial schools using publicly funded vouchers. A bill should address the issue of whether vouchers may be used for non-government run charter schools. A bill should also address how a school voucher program would be funded. It should outline a timetable for instituting a voucher program, and it must address who will be permitted to participate in such a program.

Summary and Conclusion

The idea of school vouchers as a way to allow parental choice in education as well as a method of fostering competition between schools so that they would strive to improve was first proposed by Milton Friedman in 1955. Friedman saw this as a program that could be applied to all American children. Each family would receive a voucher for each child and have a choice as to which school the child would attend. However, since that time there have been only limited experiments with

school vouchers and no program has ever been instituted on the scale that Friedman envisioned. Nonetheless, school vouchers remain an actively debated topic as part of the overall debate on school choice. Many people remain committed to the idea of school vouchers, but the opposition to school vouchers is equally strong, focusing on the use of public funds to support private schools, and questioning the constitutionality of using public funds for religious schools. As more state legislatures vote to implement school voucher programs, it would be prudent for states and the federal governments to look at school vouchers and the other options for school choice and determine how best to proceed with educating the nation's children for the future.

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