

**Keystone
State
Education
Coalition**

The Keystone State Education Coalition was originally established in 2006 as the Southeastern Pennsylvania School Districts' Education Coalition (SPSDEC). It is a growing grass roots public education advocacy group comprised of over 300 locally elected, volunteer school board members (no salaries, no benefits, no pensions) and administrators from 127 Pennsylvania school districts in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Berks, Bucks, Butler, Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Indiana, Lancaster, Lawrence, Lehigh, Mercer, Montgomery, Susquehanna, Tioga and Washington Counties.

Visit us online at: KeystoneStateEducationCoalition.org

Honorable Jeffrey E. Piccola
Chairman, Senate Education Committee
Room 173 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Fax (717) 783-3722

February 2, 2011

**RE: PA NAACP opposes using taxpayer funds to provide tuition vouchers to private schools
Madonna Poll shows 67% oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers**

Dear Senator Piccola,

In the January 23rd SunGazette, State Rep. Matt Baker, R-Wellsboro commented on SB1, "I'm not sure what this does to help our public schools, and how much this costs. We have a \$4 billion (budget) deficit and we are creating another program. Sending money to private schools may be unconstitutional." State Rep. Rick Mirabito, D-Williamsport, noted that the issue raises a number of concerns. "For the longest time in this country we didn't have free public education," he said. "So I am very concerned of taking actions that will weaken public school systems. At the same time, I recognize we must deal with some of the problems in our educational system."

They raise substantive issues. SB 1 does absolutely nothing to improve failing schools. Additionally, SB 1 demands accountability only from our traditional public schools. There are no requirements for private or religious schools that receive taxpayer funds to administer or report PSSA scores demonstrating student achievement, no transparent public budgeting/spending requirements, no right-to-know or Sunshine Law requirements.

We are attaching two items to help inform your discussion and consideration of SB1: (1) a notice from the Pennsylvania NAACP stating their opposition to taxpayer funded tuition vouchers; (2) a PSBA press release detailing a recent Madonna poll showing that 67% of Pennsylvanians oppose taxpayer funded tuition vouchers.

We urge you to oppose this proposed legislation. We look forward to a frank and thorough debate of the issues surrounding SB1 as it moves through the legislative process. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we might provide any additional information.

Best Regards,

Keystone State Education Coalition Co-Chairs:

Shauna D'Alessandro, West Jefferson Hills School District, Allegheny County
Lawrence A. Feinberg, School District of Haverford Township, Delaware County
Lynn Foltz, Wilmington Area School District, Lawrence County
Mark B. Miller, Centennial School District, Bucks County

cc: Ed Committees, Leadership, KEYSEC List

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EQUITY FOR UNIVERSAL PUBLIC EDUCATION -
EVERY SCHOOL FULLY RESOURCED, EVERY STUDENT PREPARED TO SUCCEED!



PA NAACP OPPOSES

**LAWS THAT PIT PENNSYLVANIANS AGAINST EACH OTHER
AND LEAVE MANY CHILDREN BEHIND**

WE OPPOSE POLICIES THAT LEAVE CHILDREN IN UNDERFUNDED SCHOOLS

WE OPPOSE THE USE OF TAX DOLLARS TO IMPRISON RATHER THAN TO ENLIGHTEN

**WE OPPOSE ELECTED OFFICIALS USING THEIR POWER TO
STAND BETWEEN THE CITIZENS OF PENNSYLVANIA AND THEIR RIGHT TO A FREE
AND APPROPRIATE UNIVERSAL PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT EQUIPS ALL
CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS**

**WE OPPOSE USING TAX PAYER FUNDS TO PROVIDE TUITION VOUCHERS TO
PRIVATE SCHOOLS!**

**PENNSYLVANIA CANNOT AFFORD TO BE DIVIDED ON THIS
ISSUE.**

**\$35,000 TO KEEP A KID IN JAIL FOR 1 YEAR.
\$35,000 TO PREPARE 4 KIDS FOR SUCCESS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOM
\$36,000 TO WRITE FOUR \$9,000 CHECKS TO UNMONITORED SCHOOLS WHOSE
PRODUCT IS UNCERTAIN AND WHERE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ARE UNPROTECTED
\$\$\$\$\$ MILLIONS IN UNDEFINED COSTS FOR A STATE BUREAUCRACY TO PASS OUT
VOUCHER (OPPORTUNITY GRANT) CHECKS.**

**THE COST IS TOO HIGH!
PUBLIC MONEY FOR UNIVERSAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS!**

**CONTACT YOUR SENATOR AND REPRESENTATIVE
AND Say NO to VOUCHERS!**

Find our Agenda for Education in PA at: <http://pastatenaacp.org/>

NEWS RELEASE

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

01-26-11-03

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POLL SHOWS PUBLIC OPPOSES THE CONCEPT OF TAXPAYER-FUNDED TUITION VOUCHERS

According to a recent public opinion poll, most Pennsylvanians oppose giving public tax money to parents so they can send their children to a private school. The poll presents the findings of a survey of 805 Pennsylvania adults designed by Terry Madonna Opinion Research. The sample error for the total sample is plus or minus 3.5%.

"As proponents gear up for pushing taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers through the legislature, the results of this survey show there clearly is not the public support for such a program," said PSBA Executive Director Thomas J. Gentzel. "If improving public education is truly the goal, the governor and General Assembly would be well advised to take up more widely supported initiatives such as relief from unfunded mandates currently burdening school entities."

There are some studies that claim the public supports vouchers. However, the Terry Madonna Opinion Research study used the term "taxpayer-funded" when describing tuition vouchers. Understanding this distinction, respondents overwhelmingly said "no" to tuition vouchers.

The survey results show:

- About two out of three Pennsylvanians (67%) oppose giving public money to parents so they can send their children to a private school. Only a small minority (13.7%) of Pennsylvanians strongly favor taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers. Most older Pennsylvanians, aged 55 or older, oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers and, in fact, 51% strongly oppose them. Over 70% of individuals surveyed under the age of 34, strongly or somewhat oppose tuition vouchers, more so than any other respondent

MORE

PUBLIC OPPOSES VOUCHERS – Add 1

age group.

- For respondents declaring a political affiliation, a majority of both Democrats and Republicans indicate opposition to taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers. Democrats more so than Republicans, however, oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers 69% to 58%, respectively. Independents also do not embrace tuition vouchers with 68% of them indicating that they either somewhat or strongly oppose them.
- Regardless of zip code, opposition to tuition vouchers is universally held across all Pennsylvania regions. More than two-thirds of Pennsylvanians oppose tuition vouchers in all areas of the state except in the northeast (61% oppose tuition vouchers) and the southwest (64% oppose tuition vouchers).
- Strong opposition to tuition vouchers is almost equally shared by whites and non-whites alike. More than two-thirds (69%) of non-white individuals indicated that they somewhat or strongly oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers. This is slightly more than whites where 66% said the same. Only 10% of non-white respondents said they strongly favor taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers.
- Two-thirds of Pennsylvanians (66%) oppose state law that requires school districts to pay the tuition of students attending privately operated charter and cyber charter schools. Like the issue of vouchers, Pennsylvanians hold very strong opinions on charter school tuition. Respondents holding opinions of strong opposition against charter tuition payment by school districts (44%) is almost four times greater than those strongly favoring tuition payments to charters by districts (11%).

PSBA is a nonprofit statewide association of public school boards, pledged to the highest ideals of local lay leadership for the public schools of the commonwealth. Founded in 1895, PSBA was the first school boards association established in the United States.