

School Choice Option Talking Points

Preparation for 2018 Virginia General Assembly legislation

- I. Oppose Tuition Tax Credits for donations to private schools via Scholarship Foundations ([EISTC](#))
- A. TTC programs reduce revenue for Virginia public schools; possibly up to \$25 million per year.
 - B. Taxpayers can make a profit with donations that allow both Virginia and Federal deductions
[See TCI analysis: <http://thehalfsheet.org/post/166575316458/turning-a-profit-from-charity>]
 - C. LWVUS opposes “Tuition Tax Credits” that may encourage flight from public schools
“The 1978 Convention directed the national board to oppose tax credits for families of children attending private elementary and secondary schools. Convention action was based on League support for equal access to education and support for desegregation as a means of promoting equal access. The League is concerned about the negative impacts that tuition tax credits would have on the public schools by encouraging flight, particularly from desegregated schools. The League also supports federal efforts through Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulation to deny tax-exempt status to racially discriminatory ‘segregation academies.’”
 - D. Support changes to reduce loss of revenue:
 - 1. Lower cap of EISTC donations from \$25 million per year
 - 2. Lower tax credit percentage from 65%
 - E. Oppose changes to expand tax credits that would reduce Virginia revenue further
 - 1. Prohibit raising cap of donations from \$25 million per year
 - 2. Prohibit raising tax credit percentage above 65%
 - 3. Oppose increasing eligibility to allow greater participation of students
(e.g., oppose change from less than or equal to 300% FPL to less than 400%)
 - F. See National Coalition for Public Education ([NCPE](#))
 - G. Parents may not be advised of loss of protection of rights for students with disabilities at schools receiving scholarship funds. See GAO report: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/688444.pdf>
 - H. Tax shelters undermine public education; public schools are already underfunded.
 - I. Private schools “...can also reject students who are not desirable to educate: students with specific learning disabilities, students who are English learners, students who are not reading on grade level, and students with a history of disciplinary issues.” [AASA, The School Superintendents]
http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/Resources/AASA_ITEP_Voucher_Tax_Shelter_Executive_Summary.pdf
- II. Oppose **Vouchers: Education Savings Accounts** for parents who take students from public schools
- A. LWVUS opposition via [NCPE](#) Talking Points (See NCPE attachment.)
 - B. ESAs have high startup and administrations costs such as in the 2017 Virginia proposal [HB1605](#)
 - C. ESAs are not targeted to families in need of financial assistance. Vouchers may not cover the full tuition/expenses thus limiting participation by low-income families.
 - D. No specific income level is required for eligibility.
 - E. Payment is based on the local school district SOQ, not the need of the family or the cost.
[The payment could range from \$2,100 to \$6,846 per 2017 SOQ level.]
 - F. There are few limits on how payments can be used – including transportation, home-schooling, and college tuition (Cloverdell: <https://www.irs.gov/publications/p970>)
 - G. There are no quality controls such as an approval process or accreditation requirement.
 - H. There may be few qualification standards for teachers.
 - I. Limited educational improvement is reported in other states by the Economic Policy Institute
<http://www.epi.org/publication/school-vouchers-are-not-a-proven-strategy-for-improving-student-achievement/>
Instead, EPI recommends investing in proven strategies such as early childhood education, after-school and summer programs, teacher training, and improved student health and nutrition programs.
 - J. The Virginia Constitution prohibits public funding of private schools (Article VIII, Section 10)
 - K. LWV-Tennessee Position opposing Vouchers (*LWVTN believes legislation is inevitable in TN.*)
 - 1. “Public schools provide an important locus for building community across differences.”

2. “The League opposes the use of public funds for private school vouchers.”
 3. Eligibility criteria should include the following:
 - a. The private school must accept the voucher as full payment.
 - b. Participation criteria for private school should include approval by either the state or state approved accrediting agencies.
 4. Private schools accepting vouchers must administer the same standardized assessments as those required in public schools.
 5. Schools participating in a voucher program should comply with nondiscrimination policies as provided by law. (Parents are often not informed of exemption from protection of rights.)
- See GAO report: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/688444.pdf>

L. Choosing a private school is complex and can be costly for parents

[ALEC](#) (American Legislative Exchange Council): “Opponents say parents cannot handle the responsibility of choosing their children’s educational paths.” But ALEC says parents will use tools used in any other market – consumer reviews, branding, and expert consulting. “Wealthy and educated parents already hire college admissions consultants for their high-schoolers to help craft their applications.”
<https://www.alec.org/publication/21st-century-esa/>

M. Transferring a student to a private school may not reduce the public school’s expenses

If a student transfers to a private school, the public school does not receive state funding for that student but that may not reduce the operating costs of the school because some fixed school expenses are not tied to the number of students. The effect may vary from school to school.
<http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/FiscallImpactOfPrivateSchoolChoice.pdf>

N. Freedom of choice and competition has not shown evidence of improved education

O. Investments in Public Schools rather than private schools contribute more to a healthy and knowledgeable job market.

Business perspective analysis from PENN Wharton, University of Pennsylvania:

<https://publicpolicy.wharton.upenn.edu/live/news/2023-school-vouchers-the-future-or-demise-of-education/for-students/blog/news.php>

III. Virtual Online Schools

A. Operating now: VDOE :http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/virtual_learning/index.shtml

1. Public: “Virtual Virginia”, York County MOP, Loudoun County MOP.

MOP: Multidivision Online Provider

2. Private corporations/for profit MOPs such as K12’s Virginia Virtual Academy – VAVA

B. Must meet our principles for public schools: to cultivate citizens, prepare for discourse, work across differences, and develop skills for enacting freedom-oriented decision-making.

C. For-profit virtual online schools do not always meet these standards:

1. Best and effective student/teacher ratio such as 150:1 or better
3. Providing programs that develop skills of collaboration and citizenship
3. Requiring in-person monitoring of testing (for validation, accountability, reporting)
4. Requiring determination of actual time at computer to prevent signing-in and leaving.
5. Assuring integrity and purpose of providers; may focus on profit-making and marketing
 (Note that providers do extensive marketing, pay lobbyists and donate to Education Committee members.)
6. Providing transparency including reporting of policies and assessment to the taxpayers.

[See Appendix C: Diane Ravitch “The Death and Life of the Great AMERICAN School System” and “The Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement”]

IV. Charter Schools

(See LWV-Illinois Position.)