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Vouchers ---- Parents, Don't Depend On Them

By Joel Turtel

Vouchers, which give tax money to parents to pay for tuition in private schools, sound good in

theory. The problem is that voucher programs are few and very far between. The Supreme Court declared vouchers constitutional in 2002, but currently only thirteen cities or states have created voucher or education tax credit programs.

Some of these voucher programs are tax credit programs, whether personal or corporate, and cover only a fraction of tuition costs. The voucher programs have various restrictions that limit their benefits to a relatively small number of children (such as the Florida programs that are limited to disabled students or to schools that get an 'F' grade).

Also, many of these programs pay only part of the tuition costs. In the 'tuitioning' programs in Maine and Vermont, most eligible kids simply transfer to public schools in other towns. In effect, these programs barely scratch the surface --they only help a tiny fraction of the approximately 45 million school children who now suffer through public-school education.

Also, the education establishment, teacher unions, and most state and federal legislators in the Democratic party are against vouchers. Teacher unions fight voucher initiatives tooth and nail with lawsuits. When the unions take state voucher plans to court, these lawsuits can drag on for years. The voucher fight is going to be a long, bitter, ongoing legal battle between parents, states, and the teacher unions.

Also, most states today are running huge budget deficits. As a result, states are cutting back on programs already on their books, so they can hardly afford expensive new voucher programs. California had close to a \$13 billion budget deficit (which they "closed" by the typical near-sighted trick of borrowing the money with new state bonds), Texas a \$10 billion deficit, and New York about an \$8 billion deficit.¹⁵ (these deficit numbers keep fluctuating, depending on which politician is citing which new study, but the deficits are huge).

With state governments burdened by multi-billion-dollar deficits, what is the chance that you will see a voucher program in your neighborhood any time soon? It might not be wise for you to wait around for

such a voucher miracle.

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Another problem is that even if vouchers were more widespread, private religious and secular schools simply do not have the room for all the students who would like to transfer out of public schools, either with state vouchers or private scholarships.

According to Nora Murphy, a spokeswoman for the Archdiocese of New York, private Catholic schools in New York could accommodate only 3000 new students. Yet, in September, 2002, 240,000 New York students in failing public schools qualified to transfer to a "better" public school under the "No Child Left Behind Act." If all these students' parents instead wanted vouchers for private schools (if such a voucher program existed), you see the problem.

For all the above reasons, parents who want to give their children a decent education now, cannot and should not depend on vouchers coming to their local neighborhood anytime soon.

Parents, don't wait around for another fifty years while voucher advocates fight drawn-out lawsuits and fierce opposition by teacher unions, public-school bureaucrats, and the entrenched education establishment.

Don't pin your hopes on state governments with huge budget deficits to create vouchers for every child in your state. Don't risk your children's future on state and local politicians who get campaign contributions from teacher unions and consistently vote against voucher programs. Depending on government authorities to come to your rescue is an exercise in futility.

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Poverty Can Be Erased

By Mark Brennaman

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Vouchers --- Parents, Don't Depend On Them

I'm back at my restaurant enjoying a nearly cold cup of coffee (without the whitener) as I began to read one of the back pages of my newspaper.

The top article had a title like Pentagon Spending Under Review. The story had something to do with hammers, toilet seats and coffee makers, or something like that.

Further down on the page, a headline caught my attention. I think it read Homeless Population Rises. What followed was frightening.

At the very bottom of the page was this tiny little advertisement for Tool Liquidators, Home of the Ninety-nine Cent Hammer!.

Well, it all fell into place after that. I paged the waitress for some more coffee and figured this out.

Tomorrow, the government sends agents of the FDIC, FEMA, NRA, and even all the local dog catchers to every homeless shelter and to every welfare office across the country. Their job is to deliver to every adult in the country at or below the poverty line a booklet of vouchers.

These vouchers are redeemable only at their local Tool Liquidators outlet. And what they buy with their vouchers can only be sold to the Pentagon.

The Pentagon is already accustomed to paying \$600 for hammers. And according to this article I read, they even pay upwards of a couple of thousand dollars for Mr. Coffee coffee makers.

You don't even want to know what they pay for screwdrivers!

So, I figure, those folks with vouchers shop at Tool Liquidators, pay ninety-nine cents for a hammer, and sell it to the Pentagon for \$600. That's a profit of \$599.01 per hammer! Why, it'll take just one trip to the tool store and they're quite well off. Poverty's gone.

The beauty of this plan is that it won't cost us taxpayers a penny more to lift everyone out of poverty. We're already footing the bill for the \$600 hammers and who knows what for light bulbs.

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