



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF FLORIDA

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League of Women Voters Responds to Proposed Private School Scholarship Expansion

Tallahassee -- Yesterday, a massive expansion of Florida's voucher system was filed in the state legislature, a plan that could defund public schools and divert millions of taxpayer dollars to private institutions with little accountability. The proposal (PCB FTSC 14-02), allows sales tax revenue to be sent to private scholarship organizations and significantly expands the number of students who would be eligible to receive vouchers under the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. In response to the bill's filing, League of Women Voters of Florida President Deirdre Macnab issued the following statement:

"Speaker Weatherford has his finger firmly on the red button, portending a vast defunding of our public schools, as he unveils his proposal to allow retailers to funnel sales tax to private school vouchers. Florida should brace itself for school privatization on steroids if this proposal passes through the legislature.

Any expansion of private scholarship programs is a further abdication of the state's responsibility to provide a high quality education to Florida's children. The Speaker's championing of this private scholarship system further harms our public schools, which are already consistently ranked at or near the bottom in terms of state funding for public education.

Florida's constitution does not require high quality private schools; it requires high quality public schools. Let's get back to work on our real task of educating our state's kids."

In 2013 alone, \$207 million was allocated to private schools via the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. Private schools who accept students on the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship:

- do not participate in FCAT
- are not required to publicly report school grades or FCAT scores
- are not required to have certified teachers
- are not required to utilize the state curriculum standards

The McKay Scholarship, a different state program which provides vouchers for students with disabilities to attend private schools, cost \$169 million in 2013. *Slate*

Magazine recently reported that 164 schools receiving McKay Scholarship funds taught creationism, and did not adhere to the state's adopted education curriculum.

Please contact LWVF President Deirdre Macnab for further comments.

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The League of Women Voters of Florida, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information, please visit the League's website at: www.TheFloridaVoter.org.