



## Trump Proclaims “National School Choice Week”

Just days into his administration, President Donald Trump issued [a proclamation in honor of “National School Choice Week,”](#) touching on an important theme of his non-traditional campaign for the White House. In addition to honoring teachers across the educational landscape — public schools, private schools, and more — Trump also touted homeschooling. So, for advocates of real education and educational liberty, experts say there was much to be pleased with in the proclamation.



In the document, though, Trump also calls on state and federal lawmakers to expand “school choice,” by which he presumably means allocating more taxpayer dollars to private, religious, and charter schools. Aside from constitutional problems with such a program at the federal level, there are a wide array of concerns with the broader agenda among conservatives and liberals alike. In fact, some critics say the “school choice” agenda is [a key element of the globalist establishment’s plan to undermine educational freedom.](#)

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While virtually everyone today acknowledges that there are enormous problems with the current government-education model, critics on both side of the political spectrum have long been opposed to the so-called “school choice” agenda — albeit for very different reasons. Public-school teachers unions, self-styled “progressives,” and government-education monopolists dislike the idea of losing any share of the hundreds of billions in tax funding flowing to government schools, not to mention the virtual monopoly on the minds of young Americans.

On the other side, though, critics warn that the “school choice” agenda is a major threat to genuine choice. Among other concerns, studies show that government-controlled charter schools and similar programs tend to crowd out truly independent schools. And schools that take tax funding end up being controlled by government. Trump’s proclamation touched on the two forms of school choice — genuine liberty and options for parents, as well as government-guided and -provided alternatives that bring government control.

“The foundation of a good life begins with a great education,” Trump proclaimed in the document, signed on January 25 and posted at the White House website the next day in honor of the annual National School Choice Week organized by supporters of the movement. “Today, too many of our children are stuck in schools that do not provide this opportunity.”

All of that, of course, is true. In fact, Trump’s comments are a drastic understatement — the overwhelming majority of American children today are trapped in schools that not only do not provide opportunity, but that deliberately steal the opportunity of a good education. Most school-choice advocates, outside of those in establishment circles seeking more control over all education, genuinely seek to remedy that.



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Trump goes on to say that because education of young people is “so important, the parents of every student in America should have a right to a meaningful choice about where their child goes to school.” They already do have such choices — homeschooling is legal in every state, and there exists an incredible array of options ranging from private and religious schools to online education that can be obtained for a tiny fraction of the cost of education in traditional schools.

But Trump goes on to suggest that government needs to get more involved in subsidizing different options, which critics say will inevitably lead to more government control. “By expanding school choice and providing more educational opportunities for every American family, we can help make sure that every child has an equal shot at achieving the American Dream,” Trump said. “More choices for our students will make our schools better for everybody.”

Trump did acknowledge that America is already home to “many great schools and many extraordinary teachers,” whether they be found in “traditional public schools, public charter schools, magnet schools, private or religious schools, or in homeschooling environments.” That is certainly true. But it appears that Trump wants to use the force of government and taxpayer money to expand so-called choice.

“With a renewed commitment to expanding school choice for our children, we can truly make a great education possible for every child in America,” he said. “I commend our Nation’s students, parents, teachers, and school leaders for their commitment to quality, effective education, and I call on States and communities to support effective education and school choice for every child in America.”

In the proclamation, Trump also encouraged parents to “evaluate the educational opportunities available for their children.” He also urged “State lawmakers and Federal lawmakers to expand school choice for millions of additional students.” And toward that end, Trump signed the proclamation “this twenty-fifth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand seventeen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-first.”

So-called “school choice” has become a rallying cry for many conservatives and libertarians, many of whom were delighted by Trump’s support for the issue. The thinking goes that, if competition is good — and supporters of free markets must agree that it is — then introducing at least some competition into education must be good as well. It sounds simple enough. And some “choice” schools have indeed succeeded in providing a better education than the dumbed-down public schools controlled by Washington, D.C., today.

However, in the case of vouchers for ostensibly private schools, and the creation of charter schools as they have been implemented in most states across America, the result has been, perversely, a decline in real choice. That is because once schools start accepting government money, they also must accept government regulation, including Bible bans and a prohibition on anything deemed “religious,” the establishment’s terrible Common Core standards, and other counterproductive policies that make good education almost impossible.

According to a [study by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#) that focused on the effect of charter school proliferation in Michigan, the introduction and expansion of tax-funded charter schools, which must conform to destructive federal and state regulatory regimes and dumbed-down standards, also crowded out genuinely independent education. “We find robust evidence of a decline in enrollment in private schools,” the researchers found, calling the effect “modest” and noting that Catholic and other religious schools suffered from declines similar to non-religious private schools.

“When we consider the failed state of American public schools, I certainly understand the push for



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school choice,” explained Dr. Duke Pesta, academic director at [FreedomProject Academy](#), an independent online K-12 school providing classical education based on Jude-Christian values. “The problem, however, is that charter and voucher schools are not really ‘choice’ if all they offer are different platforms to deliver exactly the same politicized, ineffective schooling models. All charter and voucher schools take state and/or federal money to function. That means states can — and are — requiring these schools to conform to Common Core methods and testing.”

The school Pesta leads, though, is different, vowing to remain independent no matter what. “At FreedomProject Academy, we refuse all state and federal money,” he said. “Because we are not beholden to these entities — the very forces that have weakened and politicized our kids’ education — we are free to teach a Classical curriculum and incorporate Judeo-Christian values. Real school choice means opting for schools completely outside the orbit of one size fits all big government education. FreedomProject Academy is that choice.”

Meanwhile, Charlotte Iserbyt, a senior adviser at the U.S. Department of Education under Ronald Reagan and the author of the book *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America*, was even more critical. Blasting comments made in a press release promoting the “school choice” week, Iserbyt, a leader in the conservative opposition to charters and vouchers, suggested that the real agenda was not a reflection of the wishes of parents and students, but rather part of a plot to transform America and the world by bringing all “education” into the service of that transformation.

In particular, Iserbyt seized on a comment by Andrew Campanella, president of National School Choice Week, who [said](#) that the school choice movement was part of an effort to “build a brighter future for our great country.” Iserbyt wondered if that really reflects the wishes of parents and students. “Do the needs of our nation now take priority over the personal goals of our children?” she wondered rhetorically.

For Iserbyt, the answer is a resounding no. Instead, she said, the personal goals of children and families — their individual desires on choice of curriculum, future careers, and more — could only be met either through non-government controlled, non-tax-funded private education, or through “traditional public education with elected school boards which determine curriculum and funding and allow student and parent input.” Iserbyt has also taken a hard line against the use of tax dollars by schools that do not operate under the control of elected local school boards, labeling it “taxation without representation.”

The ultimate agenda behind “school choice,” Iserbyt also said, was to have government and the establishment end up in charge of all education, cutting parents and communities out of the decision making process. “School choice, as it is being offered to Americans by President Trump and the elitists on the right and the left is NO CHOICE,” she told *The New American* in an e-mail. “What the government funds the government controls. What government funds, in partnership with industry, is corporate fascism.”

Indeed, this writer witnessed the process in action in a Scandinavian country. First, the government began offering vouchers to parents to put their children in any school they wanted — private, religious, public, and beyond. It was also marketed as “school choice,” and was very popular across the political spectrum.

In 2010, though, it all came crashing down and [the trap closed when Parliament decided that](#), since taxpayers fund all the schools, all of the schools would need to teach exclusively from the government’s totalitarian curriculum. For perspective, the government’s decrees mandate that ideological absurdities



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— gender is a “social construct,” for example — be taught as fact to impressionable young children. Praying was banned. In the same bill, home education also became illegal, sparking an exodus of “school refugees” to neighboring nations.

Indeed, despite the recent uproar among Democrats over the Trump administration’s perceived educational agenda, presidents Clinton and Obama were also strong boosters of charter schools and “school choice” — and not because they wanted to help American children become well educated. In fact, as *The New American* reported in late 2015, [Obama celebrated as a “Christmas miracle” the totalitarian and unconstitutional “Every Child Succeeds Act” passed by establishment Republicans](#). Among other schemes, the statute dramatically expanded federal funding for “charter” schools and “choice.”

Pouring fuel on the fire, Trump’s nominee for Education Secretary, “school choice” advocate Betsy DeVos, was a major supporter of Common Core, according to conservative-leaning Breitbart. She is also linked to establishment globalist and Common Core booster Jeb Bush. And after meeting with Trump, the transition team put out a statement saying DeVos [intended to work on “higher national standards,” sparking criticism from Trump supporters](#), not to mention legal and constitutional concerns. DeVos has since distanced herself from Common Core, but with critics on the Left and Right, her nomination is said to be in danger of being blocked by the Senate.

In the end, it is important to have clear terminology. To the extent that school choice means parents and families are free to choose what sort of education their child will receive, liberty-minded education experts say that is a wonderful thing. Government should not get in the way. However, to the extent that “school choice” is used as a marketing slogan to expand government control over remaining non-government-controlled educational options, it is an extremely dangerous development. At the federal level, it is also unconstitutional.

Among other education-related campaign points, Trump vowed to help dismantle the [Obama-backed national “education” standards known as Common Core](#). He also suggested on several occasions shutting down the unconstitutional U.S. Department of Education entirely. Both of those would be wonderful developments for constitutionalists, children, and advocates of quality education. However, when it comes to government-directed “school choice,” Americans must use extreme caution.

It took [progressives, humanists, and the establishment more than a century to so destroy American education](#), and so, fixing it will not be easy. But it must be done. America’s children, and therefore America’s future, depend on getting it right.

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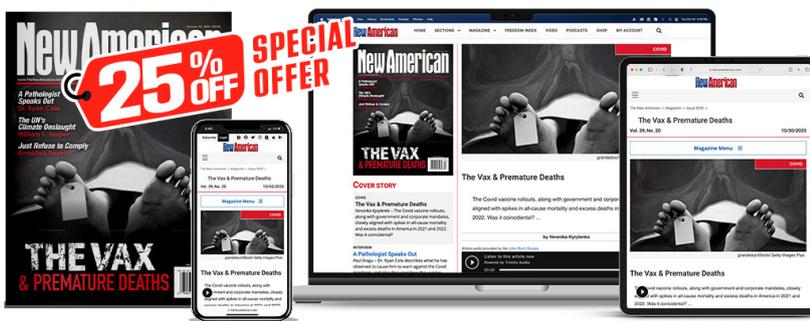


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