

## The Voucher Deception



So much of what happens in our neighborhoods revolves around the local public school. It is where we send our children each weekday morning. It is where children gather after school for scouting, sports and other activities. It is where adults go to vote and to be a part of community events, town hall meetings and other forums. Relocating families and business owners consider the neighborhood schools and their perceived quality before choosing a location.

Americans created a system in which education would no longer be in the private domain enjoyed only by those who could afford schooling. Public schooling has become the cornerstone of freedom, democracy and economic opportunity.

In recent years, a handful of special interest groups have tried to shift the country away from this promise. These groups present various compelling - sometimes contradictory - rationales, but their bottom-line goal is the same: to take public money from public schools and divert it to private schools. Certain state leaders have been vocal about their intentions to slip a voucher deal through during this special session.

With high-profile personalities and deep pockets, these groups have managed to lead some state policymakers and concerned individuals to believe there is strong public support for such a radical change. They are mistaken. Voters have repeatedly opposed proposals to support private and religious schools with tax money.

During this summer's deliberations in Texas on school finance, some state leaders have promised to push for private school voucher measures that would divert even more money from public schools. We cannot allow any voucher proposals that would divert public money to private interests. Community groups across the state have outlined nine key reasons to oppose vouchers.

- Diverting public money for private schools will take money away from our communities resulting in higher taxes for homeowners and businesses in the community.
- Private schools are not accountable to the public for their actions or results.
- The private schools in Texas do not have the capacity or capability to absorb large numbers of poor students.
- Research on vouchers in Chile and other countries show that vouchers would create a dual system of education - separate and unequal.
- The main proponents of vouchers are the same forces that have historically opposed school finance equalization.
- Students already have education options within the public school systems through magnet schools, charter schools, inter-district transfers and intra-district transfers.
- With a voucher program, it is not the parents who have a choice. The private schools have the choice about which students to accept.
- Vouchers would give a new government subsidy to private schools and wealthy parents with children already in private schools.
- Investing in our neighborhood public schools is investing in our community.

The best way to strengthen public schools is to strengthen public schools!

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*Comments and questions may be directed to IDRA via e-mail at [feedback@idra.org](mailto:feedback@idra.org) .*

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