

Jay P. Greene's Blog

Emperor Edwards Strikes Back

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Yesterday I noted that Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards was planning to cut the state's school voucher program for low-income students, despite promising during his campaign that he wouldn't take vouchers away from students. The American Federation for Children (AFC) released a stinging ad (video below) and now the governor has struck back:

In a statement released after the ad debuted, Edwards attacked as a "special interest" AFC and the parents who are upset that their children might not be able to attend the schools they did last year, and shifted blame for the spending cut in the voucher program to White. Edwards said he delegated authority to each department head to make necessary cuts to balance the state budget.

"Every agency head did their best to prioritize their funding based on their mission," Edwards, a Democrat, said in the statement. "It is important to recognize that every student currently receiving a scholarship will continue to receive one. This out-of-state special interest should direct its criticisms at the small group of legislators who failed to do the necessary work in the special session to fill the largest deficit our state has ever seen."

It's pretty rich for Edwards to accuse a public interest organization like the AFC of being a "special interest" when he's going after the voucher program primary because of his special interest allies, like the Louisiana Federation of Teachers.

AFC isn't taking any guff, however:

"Now, Gov. Edwards claims that \$36 million will cover all the kids in the program, but without taking into account tuition increases at private schools, at the very least, the state would need to fund the program at the same level it funded the program at last year — \$42 million," said Frenthewey. "Edwards's budget was at \$36 million — that \$6 million cut equals an estimated 1,000 children or more who would lose their scholarship and be sent back to their underperforming public school."

Frenthewey said Edwards, who also cast some blame toward Republican former Gov. Bobby Jindal, should take responsibility for his administration's budget. White, an independent, was appointed by Jindal.

"This is pure rhetoric," said Frenthewey. "But, I can tell you it's offensive in terms of Gov. Edwards wanting to balance the budget on the back of poor families."

As Matt Ladner would say: BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!!

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