



The Federal Government Should Stay Away From School Choice

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In a [memo](#) earlier this month, two Third Way analysts vigorously argued that Congress should not include a federal voucher program as a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization. However, the five reasons they give to oppose federal vouchers range from flawed to erroneous.

Nevertheless, though the evidence suggests that school choice programs benefit students and are popular among voters, Congress should leave it to the states.

Here is how Third Way is wrong on school vouchers:

- They claim there is "little convincing evidence that students who receive vouchers are better off for it." School choice is one of the most-researched education policies, and the best studies overwhelmingly find positive results for some or all categories of participants. Eleven of 12 [random assignment studies](#) found statistically significant positive outcomes for students who won a school voucher or scholarship lottery relative to students who entered the lottery but did not win.
- Another claim is that it is "impossible to tell how voucher students or specific groups among them, like students with disabilities or students of color, are faring from school to school—let alone compared to their non-vouchered peers." The truth is, school choice makes schools directly accountable to parents who have the ability to vote with their feet if they school fails to meet their needs.
- Third Way asserts that "letting the money follow the child" would "divert limited ... resources away from districts needing financial assistance the most." However, the available evidence suggests that the positive impact of choice and competition outweighs any potentially negative impact from lower resources.

With its proven policy success and public support, it's understandable that a federal voucher program is politically tempting. Yet politicians should resist the temptation. School choice advocates are winning in state after state.