



Congressional Black Caucus Rejects Its Own Kids

Star Parker decries politicians' failure to renew voucher program for D.C. children

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The omnibus spending bill just passed by Congress is, if nothing else, in the spirit of the season. It's a huge Christmas tree: a grand structure on which every political interest imaginable has hung its own pet program.

This is to the tune of \$1.1 trillion to \$1.8 trillion in explicit spending and another \$622 billion in indirect spending through "tax extenders."

Yet, as lobbyists in Washington showed up en masse for their shares of the fruitcake, one group was elbowed out and left with coal for its stocking.

That would be minority children in our nation's capital.

The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which for 10 years has provided vouchers for low-income minority children in Washington, D.C., to escape from one of the nation's worst public school systems and attend a private school, was not reauthorized in this latest spending orgy. As result, after the funding runs out at the end of next year, the program will shut down, unless resuscitated from scratch.

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice reported in 2014, regarding this program, that "98.8 percent of students helped this year alone were students of color, most low-income; voucher students were 25 percent more likely to enroll in college than their peers; (there was a) 91 percent graduation rate, making voucher students 21 percent more likely to graduate than their counterparts."

The program started in 2004 under President George W. Bush.

Four years ago President Obama tried to kill the program, but it was saved by Speaker John Boehner.

Now we are hearing some harsh words about the failure of Republicans to save the D.C. scholarship program from hostile Democrats this time around.

But why isn't anyone asking the more logical question?

Where are the black leaders? Why aren't they looking out for the interests of their own children?

The 46-member-strong Congressional Black Caucus supposedly exists to watch for the unique interests of America's black community. CBC Chairman G. K. Butterfield, D-N.C., issued a press release indicating opposition to the omnibus bill.

"The CBC advocates for African-American communities," says the press release. "Historically, black communities and institutions have been victims of budget cuts as Congress attempts to reduce the deficit. We have reached a breaking point. African-Americans and other communities of color can no longer absorb the cuts and allow deficit reduction to take place on the backs of our constituents."

This spending bill increases both overall spending and the deficit. Nevertheless, the D.C. voucher program is cut, and the Congressional Black Caucus does nothing.

The explanation is that the Black Caucus is more interested in the politics and economics of union power – the teachers unions oppose voucher programs – than in the education of black children.

Last month, Hillary Clinton, who as the prospective Democratic presidential candidate can likely count on 90 percent of the black vote, pulled her support for charter schools (which are also opposed by the teachers unions who have endorsed her).

"I am ... fully aware that there are a lot of substandard public schools," she said. "But part of the reason for that is that policymakers and local politicians will not fund schools in poor areas that take care of poor children to the level that they need to be."

But D.C.'s public schools are among the best-funded as well as among the worst-performing in the nation. According to the Cato Institute, D.C. public schools have been spending \$30,000 per student in recent years. This compared to an average voucher cost of less than \$9,000 per student, with better results than public schools.

As we watch the ongoing stories of crime and violence in urban areas, and the outcries and allegations of racism that supposedly drive all this, let's keep in mind the deepest problem in black America.

Their political leadership is corrupt and too busy feathering their nests to take care of their own children.