



President Trump defends school choice from attacks by Democrats and teachers' unions

Donald Trump Jr.

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During the Democratic National Convention last week, party leaders were outspoken about their movement to defund or “divert” funding for police, but as the 2020-2021 school year starts, there is another movement afoot by the same politicians and radical activists to defund school choice options — and they hope you won’t notice until it is too late.

Since the coronavirus pandemic shut down schools across the country, more than 100 religious primary schools have shut their doors for good, citing budget shortfalls caused by church closures and families who are struggling to meet tuition costs.

Charter and religious schools operate on slim budgets, often educating students at a fraction of the cost of traditional public schools.

For example, according to a report out of the University of Arkansas, charter schools receive an average of \$5,835 less per-student than traditional public schools. Religious schools operate with similar funding limitations. Catholic schools, for instance, educate students at nearly half the cost of traditional public schools.

Democrats — including Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and the union power-brokers who are helping finance his campaign — have seized on these closures, weaponizing their leverage during a pandemic to financially squeeze their competition.

The goal of the Democrats? The complete elimination of educational diversity and choice. They aim to build an education monolith, controlled solely by Democratic and activist-run unions.

We saw earlier this month as the Democratic Socialists of America were joined by 11 Democratic-led teachers’ unions to organize a “Day of Resistance.” Among their list of demands was the indefinite closure of schools and a moratorium on new charter or voucher programs.

This, of course, is not about the coronavirus pandemic as they claim. Instead, it is about the consolidation of political power over education at the expense of our children and their futures.

Democratic leaders have realized something that is being largely overlooked: the taxpayer-funded budgets of traditional public schools will be protected at all costs, whether or not they are educating our children.

But that's not true for charter and religious schools. Without in-class learning, these alternatives to traditional public schools will wither and die, while public schools remain dormant and well-funded.

If Democrats succeed, the children who will suffer the most are those who are the most disadvantaged. That is because prolonged closures may inconvenience wealthy families, but with the financial means to educate their kids through technology, homeschooling, or private tutors they will manage.

The same cannot be said for a child of a single-parent working two jobs or a student whose parent struggles to understand the curriculum, let alone teach it.

These alternatives to traditional public schools have historically catered to underprivileged, minority, and disabled children where traditional institutions have failed.

Sadly, if Democrats succeed, students who have found hope in these charter and religious schools will be forced to return to the same chronically failing public schools that they escaped.

Moreover, these failure factories are the same schools that have been protected and maintained by the same politicians and bureaucrats who are desperately trying to seize complete control over our children's educational choices.

Luckily, this desperate attack on school choice is not being ignored. Last week, President Trump proposed having educational dollars follow the student, instead of federal dollars going to pay schools that are closed.

Tax dollars taken out of the paychecks of taxpayers for education should be spent educating, even if that means giving the money directly to parents. School or education vouchers can be used to purchase books, learning devices, or private tutors — allowing disadvantaged students the opportunity to bridge the gap.

More broadly, in his second-term agenda released ahead of the Republican Nation Convention that began Monday, President Trump committed to ensuring school choice for every American child — a bold promise that convention speakers, including myself, are speaking about.

The Republican Party under President Trump is committed to school choice.

In Florida, the state Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran signed an emergency order insisting that “school districts and charter school governing boards must provide the full array of services that are required by law so that families who wish to educate their children in a brick and mortar school full time have the opportunity to do so.”

The order empowers schools, districts, students and parents to work together at the most local level to make the decisions that are best suited to their circumstances and communities. It also recognizes the role of education and the fact that educators cannot abandon their obligations to our children if they want to collect taxpayer dollars.

Yet, right on cue, a liberal judge granted the state's activist-led teachers' union a temporary injunction of the order. Leon County Circuit Judge Charles Dodson, who is set to retire in January, decided to put the interests of union bosses ahead of the state's constitution, in violation of the separation of powers and ahead of Florida's children.

It is unacceptable for Democrats and the activists who control teachers' unions to put their pursuit of power ahead of the educational needs of our children. Thankfully, President Trump and school choice leaders are fighting back to ensure every student has access to school choices and a world-class education, regardless of their circumstance or background.