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## “Out of Town” Cruz May Be Out of Touch

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Last week there was quite a controversy over whether or not Gov. Greg Abbott would support school choice in the form of vouchers.

It all started when Rev. Charles Foster Johnson of Pastors for Texas Children made it public that several Texas House members communicated to him that the Governor had assured them that he would not be “pushing” vouchers in the next session of the Texas Legislature.

In response to Johnson’s statement, Cory D’Angelis, a voucher proponent with ties to the Cato Institute, tweeted a direct question to Abbott asking if this were true. Abbott obliquely responded to D’Angelis on Twitter: 1. I don’t know who this person is. 2. I’ve never talked to this person. 3. He and I did not speak as he claims.

Several voucher proponents have noted that Johnson never claimed to have spoken with Abbott – only Texas House members who reputedly had spoken with the Governor. Next, many of those proponents pointed out that Abbott’s denial was only about speaking with Johnson but not about the content of Johnson’s claims – that the Governor would not “push” vouchers.

The Texas Scorecard – a right-wing organization that supports vouchers – pointed out that Abbott’s candidate endorsements were opposed to Sen. Ted Cruz’s endorsements on the same issue. “Many of his endorsements have also contrasted those made by U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz,” the Texas Scorecard said, “who had previously noted that school choice would be a critical factor in his decision process for offering endorsements.”

Cruz is well known in Texas, if only for his trip to Cancun during the Winter Storm and power grid debacle of early 2021. Many Texans suffering from power loss and frigid temperatures were angry with Cruz over the Mexico trip, which Cruz ultimately said was “a mistake”.

Could it be that Abbott knows something that Cruz doesn’t? That most Texans are happy with their public schools and don’t want to privatize them through vouchers?

That Cruz is beholden to privatizers of public schools and therefore endorses candidates of that same ilk is no surprise. Cruz received no less than \$15 million in campaign donations for his 2016 Presidential campaign from Farris and Dan Wilks – West Texas billionaires with a penchant for extreme right wing politics including school vouchers that would give millions of taxpayer funds to all stripes of religious institutions.

Cruz, who narrowly defeated Democratic challenger Beto O’Rourke in 2018 may be out of touch with the changing Texas electorate. Abbott and Johnson may be more in touch, understanding

that public education as a common good and representing over 90% of the future workforce is where investment needs to be made.

Ted Cruz may have just been out of town during the Winter Storm of 2021 but now he may be out of touch with voters on public education.