



South Carolina School Choice Bill is a Win-Win



By [Julie Borowski](#) on February 03, 2012

The school choice movement is rapidly gaining momentum in South Carolina. Last year, a school choice bill failed by just [one vote](#) in the South Carolina House of Representatives. A virtually identical bill, H. 4576, has been introduced this session and grassroots activists are determined to ensure that it passes. More than [350 citizens](#) gathered in Spartanburg, South Carolina to rally for parental choice in education last night. The successful event sent a loud and resounding message to legislators: pass the school choice bill or ultimately pay a heavy price at the ballot box.

Cato Institute Scholar Andrew Coulson [writes](#) that “if they gave out awards for good policy design...the folks in South Carolina would be top contenders for gold.” The bold legislation would boost competition, increase parental choice and save taxpayers money. It would provide tax credits of up to [\\$500](#) per child to families who send their children to private schools. Unlike most existing school choice programs, these tax cuts would be extended to [homeschoolers](#). Coulson is correct; South Carolina is leading the fight for real school choice.

Granting tax cuts to parents that opt to homeschool or send their children to private schools would be a step in the right direction. A [poll](#) by the South Carolinians for Responsible Government found that 63 percent of South Carolinians support tax credits while only 29 oppose them. Many families are struggling to afford the cost of their children's private school tuition. Taxpayers are immorally forced to pay for government schools via taxation regardless if they have a child attending the school. Lowering the tax burden on families would enable them to send their children to better schools.

The bill would provide tuition assistance to low-income families through privately-funded non-profit Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs). The [size of the scholarship](#) is determined solely by the individual SGO. The Individuals who donate to SGOs will receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to 100 percent of their tax liability and corporations that donate may receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to 60 percent of their tax liability. These donation tax credits will encourage people to contribute to a good cause of helping low-income families pay for good quality private schools.

Education tax credits will help students escape failing South Carolina public schools. The disturbing statistics show just how bad South Carolina public schools are right now. During the 2010-11 academic year, a whopping [76 percent](#) of South Carolina public schools (831 out of 1,037) failed to make adequate yearly progress. South Carolina has consistently ranked in the [bottom ten states](#) on 4th grade reading. Only [58.6 percent](#) of South Carolina high school students graduate on time, according to *Education Week*. The South Carolina Policy Council [found](#) that the state has the lowest SAT scores in the south.

The one-size-fits-all education model has failed children in South Carolina. Public schools in the Palmetto State are not preparing students to compete on a national scale. Education spending has [skyrocketed](#) but academic achievement and parental satisfaction remains low. It's time to implement new, bold solutions to shake up the education status quo. After [many years](#) of attempting to pass a school choice bill in South Carolina, there's a very good chance that this will be the year that we finally achieve victory. We know that our over 20,000 FreedomWorks members in the great state of South Carolina are willing to stand up to the special interests that are blocking parental choice in education.