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Independent News

Trump Names Charter School Advocate Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education

Olive Rios

December 1, 2016

Their ideology is so remarkably vicious that it is doubtful a progressive America would ever accept them as our status quo. This means that for the next four years at least we're going to have a Secretary of Private Education.

DeVos, though, has a passion for letting parents select the school for their children. She is committed, informed, and passionate.

It's interesting to know that DeVos has never taken any role in public education but has been active in working for choices of school.

Foundational education reform principles—from raising standards and strengthening accountability, to expanding public-school choice, to furthering innovations in teacher preparation and support, and advancing resource equity—all find their roots in a progressive commitment to ensuring that all children, particularly our most vulnerable, have access to schools that enable them to fulfill their potential.

The Center for Union Facts shows that there are 198 employees at the American Federations of Teachers with compensation over \$100,000, with president Weingarten standing at \$543,150. DeVos and husband Dick led an unsuccessful ballot effort in 2000 to amend the MI constitution to allow vouchers for students to attend private schools using taxpayer dollars.

She and her husband have also donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to groups opposing same-sex marriage and organizations supporting conversion therapy. "We advocate instead for as much freedom as possible".

These protestors call themselves the Badass Teachers Association. As Neal McCluskey, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, wrote in his analysis of the pick: "I have no idea where DeVos stands on early-childhood or higher education issues, and the latter, especially, is very big". She has not worked alongside, with or against the public school as well. "I'm anxious that's not going to happen with this appointee". For instance, Francis Keppel had been dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Harold Howe, whom I was lucky enough to serve as a special assistant, was superintendent of schools in Scarsdale, *New York*.

DeVos chairs American Federation for Children, a public policy group. The 501 (c)(4) organization describes itself as: "a leading national advocacy organization promoting school choice, with a specific focus on advocating for school vouchers and scholarship tax credit programs". Those protections include urging schools to extend anti-bullying policies to LGBTQ students, allow LGBTQ student groups on campus, and protect transgender students' right to use facilities that match their gender identity.

Stephanie White, executive director of Equality Michigan, said she believes that with McNeilly as an influence, DeVos' views on LGBT issues have evolved.

"By nominating Betsy DeVos, the Trump administration has demonstrated just how out of touch it is with what works best for students, parents, educators and communities", National Education Association President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said.

Trump also said he plans to hold colleges accountable for investing in their students, cutting tuition and reducing costs related to federal regulations.

"DeVos has no meaningful experience in the classroom or in our schools", the AFT leader said. DeVos held similar positions in MI and nationally.

But Senator Patty Murray of Washington, the senior Democrat on the education committee, said she would closely scrutinize DeVos's record.

Since April 2010 almost all of the contributions from American Federation for Children have gone to Hoosiers for Quality Education Political Action Committee, formerly known as Hoosiers for Economic Growth.

"As is so often the case, the most vocal opponents of federal school choice are right for the wrong reasons", writes Jason Bedrick for the Cato Institute.

DeVos, a 58-year-old billionaire philanthropist from MI, leads the American Federation for Children, which promotes charter school education.