



Scott transition team's education plan worries voucher advocate

By [Travis Pillow](#) | 12.23.10 | 12:00 pm

The “universal voucher” proposal floated this week by Gov.-elect Rick Scott’s transition team is drawing opposition from at least one longtime supporter of school vouchers.

In documents [released this week](#), Scott’s education advisers — led by Patricia Levesque, a veteran of the Department of Education under Jeb Bush and the current director of one of his school reform groups — outlined a hypothetical program that would allow parents of public schoolchildren to receive 85 percent of the money the state spends per student, which they could keep in “education savings accounts” to use as they see fit on online “virtual schools,” private schools, tutoring or even college expenses.

Andrew Coulson, a voucher advocate from the libertarian Cato Institute, worries that the idea couldn’t fly in Florida, and should instead be tried in states with friendlier legal climates, [according to the St. Petersburg Times](#).

He bases his thinking on a 2006 [ruling](#) by the Florida Supreme Court, which struck down a voucher program floated by then-Gov. Bush on the grounds that the state constitution provides for universal public education, and channeling public money to private institutions violates that principle. For Scott’s plan to pass legal muster, the court would probably have to overturn its own ruling.

What’s more, Scott’s plan calls for phasing out the corporate income tax, which currently allows for the state’s existing voucher program, the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, in which companies can sponsor student vouchers in exchange for tax breaks.

According to the *Times*, Coulson writes:

The result of simultaneously passing the [education savings accounts] program and abolishing the corporate income tax would thus be to gut Florida’s existing, successful, popular, money-saving scholarship donation tax credit program without providing a viable alternative. That would decimate school choice in Florida.

The ideas laid out by Scott’s transition advisers [bear many hallmarks](#) of the Bush education agenda, but don’t provide many specific ideas for overcoming the same constitutional barriers that stymied the former governor.

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