

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 204 • Washington, DC 20036

Phone 202-822-9000  
Fax 202-822-5077

**TO: FRIENDS OF CER**  
**FROM: JEANNE ALLEN**  
**JUNE 30, 1997**

**AROUND THE STATES IN 30 DAYS: REFORM WHIRLWIND DRAWS TO A CLOSE**

Several happenings in the world of policy — and one of the courts — have occurred in the last 30 days, signifying that tolerance is low for business as usual. A glimpse to help you catch-up:

**US SENATE:** A tax package headed for the House provides for a \$500 tax credit to assist with private school tuition for children ages 13-16, if the credit is put in a savings account for later higher education. It's got the anti-reformers in a tizzy. An ED Dept. official told *Ed Week* that the provision "...is truly akin to a private school voucher, which this administration has always been against."

**MINNESOTA:** Speaking of credits, credit is due to Minnesotans for School Choice, namely its Director Kristen Robbins and advisor Mitch Pearlstein, for assisting citizens in understanding and building support for Governor Carlson's plan to provide tax credits for lower income families and raise the deduction, both of which are applicable to various private school tuition. Also in Minnesota: Charters fared well in the same education package. Legislators lifted the cap, allocated start-up funds and lease-aid for charters, and authorized private colleges to serve as sponsors. Unions are licking their wounds.

**MASSACHUSETTS:** The good news is that lawmakers are currently slated to approve an increase in the charter school cap, to 50 schools. 13 of the newly authorized charters must be existing public schools, while only 12 can be start-ups. About 167 charter applications are currently pending in Mass. The bad news is that among other things, the legislature may forbid tax-paying companies from getting a charter, and, they'd have to bid to provide services (like all those charter people have a lot of free time on their hands). Still, a net win.

**NORTH CAROLINA:** Proposed changes to this charter state's law that would have some devastating consequences have been halted, for now. Legislators are negotiating over including teachers in the state's retirement system, maintaining the five school/per year/per district limit (rather than limiting it to five schools per district, period.), and some other modest changes. It looks good for charter fans.

**OHIO** has become charter state number 29, with a pilot project in Lucas County, OH, and conversions permitted throughout the state. And **LOUISIANA** saw its law improved and cap raised to 42.

**HUDSON STUDY SHOWS EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS:** A newly released part of a two-year long evaluation of charter schools headed up by Checker Finn and Bruno Manno shows very high satisfaction among parents, teachers and students, most notably on academic matters. Teachers feel empowered, parents believe charters provide improved learning environments, and students say their new schools and teachers are better than their previous schools.

Finally, the **US SUPREME COURT** ruled in the *Agostini v. Felton* case that the federal Title 1 program may in fact be administered on behalf of eligible private school students right where they sit. At one time the ability of schools to deliver services directly was considered an excessive entanglement of church and state between federal money for at-risk children and the private school they've chosen to attend. The expense and inconvenience are no longer justified, said the court.

All in all, June was truly a hot month, and it's still not over in some places. Look for updates in the Center's next **MONTHLY LETTER TO FRIENDS**, or call us.