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CHOICE GAINS NEW "CONVERT;" DC SCHOOL CHOICE PROPOSAL RESURFACES

Today the attached article appeared in *The Washington Post*, adding to the chorus of traditionally mainstream or left-leaning journalists and newspapers that have conceded school choice should be an alternative for the less-fortunate.

William Raspberry's column, which is syndicated in over 150 newspapers, couldn't have come at a better time. Next Wednesday, June 4, at 2:00pm, a bi-partisan group of US Senators and Congressmen will re-introduce the school choice pilot program for the District of Columbia that was a show-stopper last year and died under a filibuster from Senator Kennedy. Despite the filibuster, the bill had garnered 56 votes last year; this year, some of the 'neases' are gone, and a few more 'yeases' have been counted. Both Republican Senator Coates and Democratic Senator Lieberman are committed to seeing the DC choice program through.

In the House, Majority Leader Dick Armey is leading the charge, and has as a co-sponsor, New York Democratic Congressman Floyd Flake. The bill as currently drafted could provide up to 3,000 scholarships or tutoring assistance to low-income DC children to attend the public, private or parochial school of their choice. There are no stringent requirements on private schools to participate, and the scholarship is currently pegged at between \$2,400 and \$3,200, depending on income level and actual tuition charged.

So the scene is similar, but many of the actors are new. On top of that, over just the last twelve months, choice has found new friends in high places. It looks like it may be a very exciting and interesting couple of months in the Nation's Capitol.

The Center, along with several other national groups, has been working closely with the Hill in crafting the strategy and work necessary to build up public opinion. More details to follow. If you need a summary or copy of the bill, please do not hesitate to call.