

**NOVEMBER 3, 1993**

Dear Friend:

The purpose of this letter, which will be a regular feature of the Center, is to share with a small group of people our insights into current reform efforts, hot-spots of activity, and other important facts. I have often found myself wanting to pick up the phone and contact you about this or that development; rather than contribute to an already busy schedule, we thought this would be a good method for communication. Please feel free to share what is written here with others you deem appropriate.



**The Battle Out West**

The final score on Proposition 174: For — 30.1%; Against — 69.7%. While many of us have recently suspected the outcome, it is critical that we take stock and fully evaluate what these results means and how they will influence our future actions. The questions to ask: if school choice, in its many and varied forms, lacks credibility as a reform measure, why did the NEA and its state counterpart organizations feel the need to spend over 15 million dollars to defeat this initiative? And, given that barrage of negative campaigning, why did this initiative still win the support of almost 1.5 million Californians?

Post-mortems are important, and I look forward to talking with many of you about what it is we can be doing jointly to continue our quest. The Center will have on hand shortly a detailed analysis that highlights the thinking of the initiative's organizers and leaders around the country; if you are interested in receiving this, please let us know.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this campaign that we should walk away with is that the public does not clearly understand what school choice is and how it can improve education. Thus it is critical that we continue to educate at the most local level possible, as school choice victories have their origins in bottom-up growth and recognition.

**Potential in Michigan**

The proposals currently in front of the people of Michigan provide an opportunity to further the discussion on choice, and the education of the people both in Michigan and nationwide. While the legislature there is on a fast-track, and Governor Engler's plan is expected to be considered by the end of this month, there will be additional months of debate as they prepare to put the question of sources of school financing in front of the voters.

Charter schools garner the support of a diverse and wide array of people; however, in Michigan, the MEA and its allies there have already launched a battle against this modest reform concept.

Local groups such as TEACH Michigan headed by Dr. Paul DeWeese and the Mackinac Center have long been doing an excellent job of putting the word out and will continue to do so. For our part, The Center is bringing our S.W.A.T. team of experts and community organizers on the road and will hold a large-scale Town Meeting right outside of Detroit later this month. We are planning to attract nearly 2,000 parents and school and community representatives, and will treat them to a brief video tape of network television programs on choice, discussion of school reform from some of our best and brightest, and entertain an hour of questions from the audience. We hope to have this televised locally via cable, and are working on C-SPAN coverage as well. If you'd like more information as we firm up details this week, please let us know.

There is a lot of potential for a watered-down version of the Governor's proposal. It is our hope that with such educational forums, we may be able to build greater support for more vital education reforms.

### **Choice Candidate Wins New Jersey Gubernatorial**

Republican Party candidate Christie Whitman defeated Governor James Florio for New Jersey's top spot. Governor-elect Whitman has been a supporter of school choice reform and thus may be helpful to school reform activists in the state. It is important to note that she assured Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler of her support for his efforts.

We've been hearing from a lot of folks in Virginia who are interested in moving forward with reform in their state. With George Allen, a long-time supporter of educational choice, soon taking up residence in the Governor's Mansion, the possibilities for legislation in Virginia are looking up.

### **Hot Spots**

Alabama: A well-organized group of conservative activists and business leaders are fighting the Governor's OBE (Outcome Based Education) bill with a solid standards bill of their own. Alabama Education Association President and gubernatorial candidate Paul Hubbert is, startlingly, on their side.

Texas: Last session, citizens there saw a narrow defeat of a low-income choice demonstration project. The Texas Public Policy Foundation is gearing up for a massive education effort and the Texas Justice Foundation (Allan Parker) is filing suit on behalf of low-income parents seeking choice as a remedy to failed schools.

Pennsylvania: The Keystone state should be on everyone's radar screen as they enter the critical stages of their legislative battle for choice. The REACH Alliance continues to grow at all levels. One unique concept, the brainchild of

co-chairman Paul Henkels, is the distribution of billboards in front of each of the state's parochial schools, announcing that "St. Agnes is saving the taxpayer \$1,350,000 (the number of students times the state per pupil cost in that area) this year." The signs are powerful reminders that these schools are providing a service in more ways than one. This media is available for a relatively low cost of about \$30.00 per billboard.

More on progress in the states next month.

Finally,

### **At the Center**

We have a number of brief Action Papers on issues of choice, private voucher plans, legal actions on choice, accountability, and other models of existing, successful school reforms. Our Action kits are more in depth and include clips, summary papers, and publications from groups around the country. We are also prepared to do briefing papers on special subjects. Please let us know if we can be helpful in anyway, and by all means, let us know of your ideas.

Until next time,

Jeanne Allen  
President