



*Making Schools Work Better for all Children*

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**CHARTER SCHOOLS WEEK:** The Second Annual National Charter Schools Week has passed, with millions of Americans exposed to the charter concept - many for the first time. An editorial in the Wall Street Journal (using some of the material derived from CER charter week activities) underscored for Americans that "Charters vary in scope and mission, but that's because the essence of charters is a rejection of the establishment's one-size-fits-all approach," going on to cite schools that focus on underachieving students and schools that focus on gifted and talented students.

No state celebrated better than Indiana, where a new law makes that state the 38th to have a charter law (the 7th strongest in the nation), and where CER has already begun working with local organizers to help turn conceptual schools in to reality. CER issued its latest round of state law rankings, the results of its latest survey, sponsored Congressional tours of charter schools, and conducted other activities in the nation's capital. You can view activities of [Charter Schools Week](#).

**STATE LAW RANKINGS:** A new ranking of the nation's 38 charter laws came off the presses during Charter Schools Week, and it shows that those states with multiple charter authorities and few limits on the number of schools permitted have generated the greatest number of charter schools. After a decade of charter school development and best practices, we're able to see that some laws look better in theory than they are in practice - and a strong charter law is the single most important factor in creating strong charter schools. See the report at [our Charter school page](#).

**MOVES:** Arizona state superintendent of public education Lisa Graham Keegan has announced her plans to step down to become chief executive of the Education Leaders Council, an organization of state education leaders she helped found, and which was begun here at CER. Calling ELC an "action tank," Keegan has said she would use it to launch referenda and propositions on state ballots ... as well as to help develop the new mainstream of education thinking. Arizona's loss is the education reform movement's gain, and we welcome this added strength to the battle for accountability, choice, and charters. For more information, go to: [www.educationleaders.org](http://www.educationleaders.org).

**FEDERAL POLICY:** There's still a lot of uncertainty about the education bill being negotiated in Congress. At press time, it appears the package does include several elements of the president's original proposals, including increased flexibility in a demonstration project affecting seven states, required annual testing for Title I accountability, and charter school support. There's also the possibility that a choice demonstration program will be considered, but as they say in the theatre, "it ain't over 'till the fat

lady sings.

**SPENDING & STAFFING:** A new report from the Education Intelligence Agency provides important insight into how states spend their money on education: From teacher compensation, to classroom instruction as a percentage of total school work force, to number of classroom teachers per district administrator. With more than a dozen tables, it's a "should not miss" report. You can find it [by clicking here](#).

**CHARTER OBSTACLES:** Good charter laws are important, but the way state agencies interpret them can be even more important. Fed up with the illegal imposition of regulations on California charter schools, the California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC) has taken the state Department of Education to court. Represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation, CANEC is seeking declaratory relief from state regulations forcing charters to abandon their own financial accounting systems and replace them with more costly, inefficient and burdensome financial reporting systems used by traditional public schools. As CANEC executive director Sue Bragato noted, regulations like these "undermine the very reason for creating charter schools - to cut through the complex tangle of red tape that saps creativity and innovation in our public school system." See [www.canec.org](http://www.canec.org).

**STATE ROUND-UP:** Action (and inaction) on education reform legislation around the country generally shows that the "War on Charter Schools" has moved to the state houses. In **NORTH CAROLINA**, the cap on charters will remain at 100, as legislation to raise it died at "crossover" between the houses. In **HAWAII**, another step (an "independent review panel") was created for charter formation and, worse, the state no longer "shall" provide funding for startups, but merely "may" provide funding. In **TENNESSEE**, **IOWA**, and **MARYLAND**, proposals to create charter schools died when the sessions died, or were killed by charter opponents.

**FLORIDA:** Florida offers better news, however, as bills head to Governor Jeb Bush which would dramatically expand the voucher program made available to 340,000 students with disabilities who are unable to obtain the services they need at their traditional public school. Together with a dollar-for-dollar corporate tax credit for businesses donating to scholarship funds for children in poverty, Florida is now the national showcase for reform in the area of school choice. See [our school choice page](#).



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