

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF SCHOOL CHOICE

HON. NEWT GINGRICH

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 1997

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD two articles highlighting the positive impact of giving parents the ability to choose their children's school.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 18, 1997]

SCHOOL VOUCHER STUDY FINDS SATISFACTION

(By Tamar Lewin)

In the first independent evaluation of Cleveland's groundbreaking school voucher program, a Harvard University study has found that the program was very popular with parents and raised the scores of those students tested at the end of the first year.

"We found that parents who have a choice of school are much happier, and these private schools seem to be able to create an educational environment that parents see as safer, more focused on academics and giving more individual attention to the child" said Paul E. Peterson, director of the Education Policy and Governance at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, which issued the report. "This happens despite the fact that these are very low-income students."

The Cleveland experiment has been closely watched as school vouchers emerge as a potent political issue across the country.

The report found that two-thirds of the parents whose children received vouchers to attend a private or parochial school were "very satisfied" with the academic quality of the school, compared to fewer than 30 percent of the parents of students who applied for vouchers but remained in public schools.

In addition, the parents using vouchers were also more than twice as likely to be happy with the school's discipline, class size, condition and teaching of moral values than those remaining in public school.

During the last school year, the Ohio Department of Education gave 1,996 Cleveland students from low-income families vouchers covering up to 90 percent of private or parochial school tuition, to a maximum of \$2,250. The amount is slightly more than a third of what the public school system spends annually per pupil.

Most students used the vouchers at Catholic schools. But about a quarter of those who received vouchers—mostly those who could not find another suitable placement—attended two new independent schools set up by advocates of the voucher program, known as Hope schools.

The study found that those students, tested at the beginning and end of the school year, made significant academic strides, gaining 15 percentage points in math and 5 percentage points on reading tests, relative to the national norms. However, language scores declined 5 percentage points overall, and 19 points among first graders.

The Cleveland schools have been troubled for years; in 1955, the system was put under state control when it ran out of money halfway through the year. Rick Ellis, a spokes-

man for the Cleveland schools, said that because the school system was now operated by the state, and the state also runs the voucher program, the Cleveland schools had taken no position on the program, which has been expanded to cover 3,000 students this year.

But Cleveland's voucher program—like the nation's only other large scale voucher program, in Milwaukee—remains under the cloud of a continuing court challenge. In May, an Ohio appeals court ruled that because the vouchers could be used at religious schools, the program was an unconstitutional mingling of church and state. The State Supreme Court, however, ruled that the program could continue this year, pending its review. With the Milwaukee voucher program pending in State Supreme Court, it is likely that one or both of the cases will ultimately wend their way to the United States Supreme Court.

Despite the legal uncertainties, vouchers remain a powerful political issue across the country:

In New Jersey in April, the Education Commission barred Lincoln Park, a suburban school board, from using tax money for vouchers.

In Vermont last year, the education office took away education funds of the Chittenden Town School District when it tried to include parochial schools in a voucher program for high schools.

In New York City and several other cities, small programs, privately financed by philanthropists, provide scholarships allowing some public school students to attend parochial schools.

In Washington, House and Senate Republicans have proposed a Cleveland-style program for the District of Columbia schools.

The evaluation of the Cleveland program is based on a survey of 2,020 parents who applied for vouchers, including 1,014 parents of voucher recipients, and 1,006 parents who applied but did not use the vouchers.

Those who applied, but ultimately remained in public school, cited transportation financial consideration and admission to a desired public school or failure to be admitted to the desired private school.

The average income of families using vouchers was lower than those whose children remained in public schools, but the two groups did not differ significantly with respect to ethnicity, family size, religion, or mother's education or employment. But those staying in public schools were more likely to be in special education classes or classes for the gifted.

The vast majority of participants, 85 percent, said their main reason for applying to the voucher program was to improve education for their children. Other commonly cited reasons were greater safety, location, religion and friends.

"I like to emphasize that parents said what was really important to them was academic quality of the school," said Professor Peterson, whose co-authors were Jay P. Greene of the University of Texas and William G. Howell of Stanford University. "A lot of people say low-income families don't care about quality, that they choose schools based on other factors, but that's not what the parents say."

[From the Wall Street Journal, Sept. 18, 1997]

CLEVELAND SHATTERS MYTHS ABOUT SCHOOL CHOICE

(By Jay P. Greene, William G. Howell, and Paul E. Peterson)

As delays in repairs keep the doors to Washington D.C.'s public schools closed, Congress is debating whether to approve the District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act, which could help restructure this dreary, patronage-ridden system and give at least a couple of thousand poor students a chance to attend the private school of their choice. True to his teacher-union allies, President Clinton remains adamantly opposed to giving poor children the same chance at a private education that his daughter, Chelsea, had.

In deciding whether to challenge the president, Congress would do well to consider what's been happening in Cleveland, site of the first state-funded program to give low-income students a choice of both religious and secular schools. Of more than 6,200 applicants, pupils entering grades K-3 last year, nearly 2,000 received scholarships to attend one of 55 schools. The scholarships cover up to 90% of a school's tuition, to a maximum of \$2,250, little more than a third of the per-pupil cost of Cleveland public schools.

This past summer we surveyed more than 2,000 parents, both scholarship recipients and those who applied but did not participate in the program. We found that parents of scholarship recipients new to choice schools were much more satisfied with every aspect of their school than parents of children still in public school. Sixty-three percent of choice parents report being "very satisfied" with the "academic quality" of their school, as compared with less than 30% of public-school parents. Nearly 60% were "very satisfied" with school safety, as compared with just over a quarter of those in public school. With respect to school discipline, 55% of new choice parents, but only 23% of public-school parents, were "very satisfied."

The differences in satisfaction rates were equally large when parents were asked about the school's individual attention to their child, parental involvement, class size and school facilities. The most extreme differences in satisfaction pertained to teaching moral values: 71% of the choice parents were "very satisfied," but only 25% of those in public schools were.

Our other findings provide powerful answers to many of the arguments raised by voucher opponents:

Parents, especially poor parents, are not competent to evaluate their child's educational experience. But test scores from two of the newly established choice schools justify parental enthusiasm. Choice students attending these schools, approximately 25% of the total coming from public schools, gained, on average, five percentile points in reading and 15 points in mathematics during the course of the school year.

Choice schools don't retain their students. In fact, even though low-income, inner-city families are a highly mobile population, only 7% of all scholarship recipients reported that they did not attend the same school for the entire year. Among recipients new to choice schools the percentage was 10%. The comparable percentages for central-city public schools is twice as large.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Private schools expel students who cannot keep up. But only 0.4% of the parents of scholarship students new to school choice report this as a reason they changed schools this fall.

Poor families pick their children's schools on the basis of sports, friends, religion or location, not academic quality. Yet 85% of scholarship recipients from public schools listed "academic quality" as a "very important reason" for their application to the program. Second in importance was the "greater safety" to be found at a choice school, a reason given by 79% of the recipients. "Location" was ranked third. "Religion" was ranked fourth, said to be very important by 37%. Friends were said to be very important by less than 20%.

Private schools engage in "creaming," admitting only the best, easiest-to-educate students. But most applicants found schools willing to accept them, even though a lawsuit filed by the American Federation of Teachers prevented the program from operating until two weeks before school started. When those who were offered but did not accept a scholarship were asked why, inability to secure admission to their desired private school was only the fourth most frequently given reason, mentioned by just 21% of the parents remaining in public schools. Transportation problems, financial considerations and admissions to a desired public school were all mentioned more frequently. (Cleveland has magnet schools that may have opened their doors to some scholarship applicants.)

The data from Cleveland have some limitations, because the program was not set up as a randomized experiment. Yet the comparisons between scholarship recipients new to choice schools and those remaining in public schools are meaningful. That's because, with respect to most of their demographic characteristics—such as mother's education, mother's employment, and family size—the families of scholarship recipients did not differ from those remaining in public schools. In fact, the voucher recipients actually had lower incomes than the group to which they were compared.

Cleveland's success at school choice should not remain an exception to public schools' monopoly on education. If members of Congress care at all about the education of poor children living in the innercity, they should approve the voucher legislation for Washington now before them.

PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE SEEING
DOCTORS BECAUSE THEY DON'T
HAVE ENOUGH MONEY—NOT BE-
CAUSE MEDICARE PAYS DOC-
TORS TOO LITTLE

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 1997

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the just-enacted Balanced Budget Act includes a provision that allows doctors not to participate in Medicare for 2 years at a time, but instead to private contract with patients so that they can charge these patients much more than the Medicare fee schedule.

There is now a move underway to strike the 2-year requirement and let doctors do wallet biopsies—decide on a patient-by-patient basis whether they are going to ask patients to give up their Medicare rights and insurance and pay the extra in an individual private contract.

I can think of nothing that will encourage patients to move into HMO's faster, so that they are protected against the fear of this type of doctor extortion. The American Medical Association supports the proposal, but it is an idea that must have been deviously planted in their association by a mole from the HMO lobby—the American Association of Health Plans.

The proposal is pure greed wrapped in the flag of freedom.

Before the Congress is drowned in the rhetoric of this issue, we should note the facts. To the extent that Medicare beneficiaries have trouble seeing doctors, it is almost totally due to the fact that the cost is too much for the beneficiaries—not that Medicare doesn't pay the doctor enough to allow the doctor to see patients.

The latest data from the independent congressional advisory panel—the Physician Payment Assessment Commission—shows that only 4 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries reported having trouble getting health care in the last year. About 11 percent had a medical problem, but failed to see a physician, while 12 percent did not have a physician's office as a usual source of care. Roughly 10 percent of Medicare beneficiaries delayed care due to cost. Considering all four access measures, about 26 percent of Medicare beneficiaries cited experiencing at least one of these problems.

PhysPRC reports that from their surveys of those who failed to see a physician for their serious medical problem, 43 cited cost as the reason. About 8 percent of those who failed to see a physician could not get an appointment or find an available physician. For another 8 percent, transportation was the problem, 13 percent felt there was nothing a doctor could do, and 11 percent were afraid of finding out what was wrong.

In another words, Congress is preparing to let doctors charge patients infinitely higher fees because less than 1 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries had trouble finding a doctor—perhaps they lived in a rural area, etc. Yet over 5 percent of Medicare's nearly 40 million beneficiaries could not get to a doctor because they didn't have enough money—and Congress is silent.

Mr. Speaker, a humane Congress, a compassionate Congress, a logical, rational Congress would put five times as much effort into addressing the problem of doctors costing too much as it would in addressing what may be a 1-percent problem of a few doctors wanting to get paid more.

Where are our priorities, Mr. Speaker? A vote to let doctors, the richest 1-percent income group in our Nation, charge the sky's the limit, while ignoring the needs nearly 2 million seniors who find doctors already too expensive is a shameful vote.

TRIBUTE TO HOLY FAMILY PARISH

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 1997

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Holy Family Parish for its 100

years of providing spiritual guidance, counseling, and education to the south Bronx community.

On September 20, the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary in my south Bronx congressional district. On this joyful occasion, Archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor officiated at a Thanksgiving Mass. Parishioners joined together in prayer to thank the Lord for the parish's 100 years of fruitful service.

Holy Family Parish has a long and inspiring history of perseverance and commitment to making a difference in the south Bronx. Through the years, the church has served a vibrant community of people from many ethnic backgrounds.

In the late 1890's, Rev. Joseph S. Mechler saw the need to serve an emerging community in the Bronx. In the fall of 1897, the cornerstone for the new church was laid, and by Christmas of that same year the congregation celebrated their first mass in the new building.

Archbishop Michael Corrigan dedicated the church in 1898. He lived in the basement of the parish and served his community until his final years.

Since 1903, eight pastors have faithfully served the parish. Among them was Father Urban Nageleisen, who served the church for 37 years, until his death in 1949. He was a friend and spiritual adviser to the growing German immigrant community of the time. Under his pastorate, the church also established a school for children with the help of the Sisters of St. Agnes.

During the difficult years of the Depression, the church continued serving the faithful and the congregation actually grew in numbers.

With the passing away of Father Nageleisen, Father John Mechler assumed the leadership of the church. During those years, the church and the convent that housed the Sisters of St. Agnes were both very deteriorated. Pastor Mechler proposed and raised the funding to build a new convent and a new church in the south Bronx. The new parish kept the original cornerstone.

Throughout its history, the Holy Family Parish has been responsive to the changing needs of its community. In 1981, the parish celebrated their first mass in Spanish in recognition of the growing Hispanic community, which had become an integral part of the church. In addition, the lower part of the church has been transformed into a meeting place for senior citizens, where hot lunches, recreational activities, and medical services are provided.

Today, Father James D. Flanagan leads the church. After 100 years, the church continues to be a catalyst of positive change in our community. Over 700 children are currently enrolled in the school, which educates students from kindergarten to eighth grade. In addition, hundreds of members of the community have grown in their faith.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Holy Family Parish for its 100 years of history at the service of the south Bronx community.