



**The Washington Flyer
January 28, 2011**

For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions, even on important subjects, which I once thought right but found to be otherwise.

Benjamin Franklin

National School Choice Week

This week marks the inaugural [National School Choice](#) Week, with series of events being held around the country. These events have focused on highlighting the need for viable educational alternatives for all children in light of the serious issues in the public school system overall. As [Milton Friedman](#), a noted economist, once stated, “If you subsidize the student instead, you would have competition. The student could choose which school he would go to and that would force the schools to improve and to meet the tastes of their students.” This movement has garnered bipartisan support from unlikely allies such as Newt Gingrich, Jeb Bush, Senator John McCain (R – AZ) and Senator Joe Lieberman (D – CT). Speaker of the House John Boehner demonstrated his deep commitment to this cause with a [video endorsement](#) for school choice, and by inviting students and families from the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, along with other school choice advocates, to attend the State of the Union address and sit in the “[Speaker's Box](#).” He also [introduced](#) a [bill](#) on Wednesday, the S.O.A.R. Act (“Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act”) which will revive funding for the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP). This is the only bill the Speaker plans to sponsor during this Congress which underlines the high priority the former House Education and Labor Committee Chairman places on this issue. The D.C. OSP was defunded under the last Congress, but survey data compiled from the program’s recipients showed parents’ satisfaction with the higher academic standards and increased safety at the school they chose for their children. Other statistics, such as an impressive graduation rate of 91% among former D.C. OSP recipients compared with the low average of 49% among D.C. public schools, also illustrated the program’s effectiveness. School choice advocates point to other numbers that underscore the need for educational options in all of the U.S.: America ranks 35 out of 57 in high school literature and math scores, yet spends over \$10,000 per pupil to achieve these alarmingly low results. Currently, only 15% of the nation’s students attend private or parochial schools. The aim of the school choice movement is to empower parents and provide children with the best array of options available.

State of the Union and Education

President Obama’s annual [address to the nation](#) on Tuesday presented an outline of his concerns about some disturbing trends in American education. He offered several solutions for fixing the current programs and set new goals for the future. The President pointed to statistics that show that one-fourth of students in the U.S. are not finishing high school and that America has dropped to ninth in the world in college graduates. He urged parents to instill a desire to learn in their children, set limits on activities such as television watching, and place high expectations on their child’s academic performance. Yet he did not recognize the importance of parental choice in determining the best educational option for their children’s success. The President stressed the need for a [replacement](#) of the Bush era “No Child Left Behind” policy based on the “Race to the Top” model, claiming that it was “one of the most meaningful reforms in a generation” and had experienced great success. However, he failed to address the widespread concern that “Race to the Top” has generated an unprecedented

expansion of federal control over education, thereby limiting state and local control. In addition, the President urged the hiring of 100,000 new teachers in the core areas of science, technology, English, and math. He asked Congress to consider making permanent a tuition tax credit of up to \$10,000 for these future teachers over a four year period to encourage this effort. Finally, he highlighted further goals such as continuing to revitalize the community college system and formulating a palatable solution for illegal immigration that would not “unfairly harm” young people who could make valuable contributions to our country in the future. No mention was made of the achievements resulting from school choice programs, or of the successful work of private, faith-based schools or home school students and their families. Following the State of the Union address, Rep. Paul Ryan (WI) delivered the [Republican response](#), and Rep. Michelle Bachmann (MN) also delivered [her response](#) as the Chair of the Tea Party Caucus.

Sanctity of Life Month – March for Life and Pro-Life Special Orders

On Monday, the nation’s capitol was the site for the 38th annual [March for Life](#). More than [250,000 pro-life marchers](#) gathered to commemorate the passage of the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision and call for its overturn by the Supreme Court. According to some estimates, over 27,000 young people participated in the March. Recent events such as the GOP landslide in the November elections together with recent proposals to limit and ultimately end taxpayer funded abortion ([H.R. 3, “No Tax-Payer Funding for Abortion Act”](#)) have given pro-life groups hope for the future. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor asserted during his speech at the March for Life that the House of Representatives has one of “the most pro-life freshman class in memory.” Hundreds of signs with slogans such as “Defund Planned Parenthood” and “I was adopted, not aborted” were carried by marchers. In contrast, across town pro-choice groups rallied to celebrate the *Roe v. Wade* decision and President Obama released a [statement](#) reiterating his belief that abortion is a private decision and pledging his continuing commitment to pro-choice legislation. On Tuesday in the [Republican response](#) to the State of the Union, Rep. Paul Ryan said, “We believe government’s role is both vital and limited – to defend the nation from attack and provide for the common defense ... to secure our borders... *to protect innocent life*... to uphold our laws and Constitutional rights ... to ensure domestic tranquility and equal opportunity ... and to help provide a safety net for those who cannot provide for themselves.” [Emphasis added] Last week, pro-life Representatives held a Pro-Life Special Order on the House Floor “to call for protection of the unborn, a respect for the sanctity of human life, and an end to taxpayer funding of abortion.” These “Special Orders” are a way for House Members to demonstrate their commitment to a cause with one minute speeches, and in this case, specifically provided an opportunity for the participating Congressmen to demonstrate their solidarity with the pro-life movement. To view these speeches [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACCS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[New Principals](#)

[Proficiency Eludes U.S. Students on Science Tests](#)

[Red Zone Defense](#)



Editor: Maureen Wiebe
Staff Writer: Courtney Holloway
Legislative Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202.547.2991 • Fax: 202.547.2992

