

**PRESIDENT CLINTON:
A LEADING PROPONENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE
FOR ALMOST A DECADE**

[E]very state should give parents the power to choose the right public school for their children. Their right to choose will foster competition and innovation that can make public schools better. We should also make it possible for more parents and teachers to start charter schools, schools that set and meet the highest standards, and exist only as long as they do. Our plan will help America to create 3,000 of these charter schools by the next century ... so that parents will have even more choices in sending their children to the best schools.

--President Clinton, State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997

PRESIDENT CLINTON HAS A LONG RECORD OF SUPPORTING PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

As Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton was a leading proponent of public school choice. [Time, 12/4/89; National Journal, 7/1/89] In Arkansas, he pushed for and signed a bill to allow parents to choose the schools they wish their children to attend, thereby improving school performance by fostering competition among them. [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 3/18/89; Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 3/10/89] In fact, Arkansas was one of the first states to pass a school choice measure. [AP, 11/18/92]

And the President has maintained his support for public school choice while in office. In his State of the Union Address, the President challenged every state to give parents the power to choose the public schools their children will attend. [Inaugural Address, 2/4/97] And as he has travelled throughout the country, the President has promoted public school choice in states from Minnesota to North Carolina. [Public Papers of the President, 6/25/97; Public Papers of the President, 2/10/97; Public Papers of the Presidents, 3/13/97]

Giving schools the tools they need to create public school choice. President Clinton also fought for and signed the Improving America's Schools Act, which provides funds for any Title I school district to develop and implement public school choice programs. ["Improving America's Schools Act," Sec. 1115A, P.L. No. 103-382, approved 10/20/94]

PRESIDENT CLINTON HAS BEEN A PIONEER IN THE CHARTER SCHOOL MOVEMENT THAT EXPANDS PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

President Clinton has made a national commitment to creating charter schools across the country. The Clinton Administration is helping teachers, parents and community groups start charter schools -- innovative public schools that stay open only as long as they produce results and meet the highest standards. These charter schools increase the choice of public schools available to parents because they are open to all students and cannot charge tuition. Thus far, the Clinton Administration has announced over \$50 million in grants to schools in 23 states as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. [Department of Education, Charter Schools Program, 10/97]

President Clinton's commitment to charter schools has helped foster an environment where charter schools are growing exponentially. When President Clinton took office, there was one charter school in operation nationwide and only two states with a charter law. This year, over 700 charter schools are expected to be in operation. Similarly, the number of states with charter laws continues to grow --29 states, and the District of Columbia have now passed enabling legislation. [Domestic Policy Council, 10/97]

The tremendous growth in charter schools has come at a time when the President has pushed his charter school agenda at the national level. President Clinton made charter schools part of the reauthorization of public charter schools program, which was enacted in 1994 as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. With the President's leadership, the charter school program has grown from \$6 million in FY 1995 to \$51 million in FY 1997. The President has requested \$100 million from Congress for FY 1998 to support the development of approximately 900-1000 charter schools. [Office of Management and Budget, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 1998, 1997]

Charter schools are examples of the kind of innovation that results when we commit to improve -- not abandon -- our public schools. Charter schools are examples of genuine public education reform --they provide a mechanism for change with real public accountability for promised results. Unlike charter schools, private school vouchers offer no public accountability -- there are no standards to meet, and no way to shut them down.

Education/Private School Vouchers

Q: Recently columnist William Raspberry, long a public schools loyalist, has said the time has come to try out vouchers where the public schools are failing. Earlier this year, one of your former advisors, Bill Galston, called for a national experiment on the effectiveness of private school vouchers. Given the numerous horror stories of how public schools are failing students in our cities today, do you remain opposed to private school vouchers?

A: We can and should work to provide our students with the safe and disciplined public schools and the world class education they deserve. I was so proud last week when we released the results of the international math and science tests for the 4th grade. Our students tied for the 2nd in the world in science, and scored above the international average in math. If we keep working at it, we can create a generation of students who are among the best educated in the world.

Many of our urban public schools are doing a fine job, and they deserve our support. However, where schools are failing, we need to take tough action and fix them, by getting rid of watered-down curriculum and retraining the teaching staff. If the school still doesn't respond, then it should be closed down and reopened with a new staff that will get the job done.

Moreover, every family should have the right to choose which public school their child will attend. I have challenged every state to pass a charter school law that allows parents and teachers to start new public charter schools that stay open only as long they do a good job. In fact, I have proposed nearly doubling the charter school start-up program (to \$100 million next year) to help start 3,000 charter schools over the next several years.

While I support public school choice, I continue to oppose federally funded tuition vouchers for private elementary and secondary schools. I also oppose state funded and locally funded vouchers. Vouchers take money away from public schools, and controversy over vouchers distracts communities from the hard work of improving our schools.

DRAFT P. 1/1

10-7-96

2:50 PM

Regarding private school vouchers, there is nothing new in the President's position as presented last night.

The President supports giving families and students more choices in public education and the best example of that is funding for charter schools (3000 in his balanced budget over 7 years).

But the President opposes the use of Federal funds for private school vouchers.

For other than Federal funds, these are state and local decisions; but he personally would not support a voucher plan that either was unconstitutional or that would shift funds from public schools to private schools. In 1993 in California, he said: "... if I were a citizen of the state of California, I would not vote for Proposition 174, The Private Voucher Initiative."

That was his position before the debate, during the debate, and that is his position after the debate.

We help poor children regardless of where they go to school -- in Title I and the school lunch program. We stood up against the Republican Congress when they took funds away from those program.

The President has made improving elementary and secondary education and financial aid for students to attend college a high priority during his entire Administration and is continuing to work on these critical issues.

March 17, 1997

Mr. Bob Chase
President
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-3290

Dear Bob:

I was delighted by your recent speech in which you announced the National Education Association's intention to "reinvent" itself and help lead the way in U.S. school reform efforts. As you know, my number one priority for the next four years is to ensure that all Americans have the best education in the world, and I am glad to have the NEA on our side as we work to achieve this goal.

Thanks, also, for sharing your concerns regarding the status of NASA's Teacher-in-Space program. I agree that NASA has a role to play in helping teach and inspire the next generation of Americans. I have forwarded your letter to my science advisor, Dr. John Gibbons, and asked that he review the current standing of NASA's Teacher-in-Space program and contact you directly with his findings.

I have also received your letter about private school vouchers. I understand the importance of this issue to the members of the NEA, and I appreciate your taking the time to outline your concerns.

As you know, in December of last year, I made clear my continued opposition to federally funded tuition vouchers for private elementary and secondary schools. I also oppose state funded and locally funded vouchers, which take money away from public schools.

Those who support vouchers see them as a solution to the challenges facing our education system, particularly in our urban areas, but I believe that they are wrong. Vouchers would divert critical dollars from neighborhood public schools that are already short on resources in order to send a few selected students to private schools -- schools that are not publicly accountable. In addition, voucher proposals may distract long-term attention from the hard work of reform needed to change failing schools into good schools and good schools into outstanding schools.

As you know, however, under the Tenth Amendment, states and localities have the right to establish and fund their own, constitutionally valid voucher programs. It is not permissible for the federal government to erect legal barriers that prevent them from doing so.

I believe that we should move beyond this divisive debate and work together to ensure that every student, no matter where he or she lives, can attend a public school that is safe and academically challenging. This means higher expectations for all of our students. It means that teachers and principals must be accountable for student performance, and that states and communities should have the ability to intervene effectively in failing schools. And it means that we must build strong partnerships among schools, families, and communities that make education everybody's top priority.

I look forward to working with you and your members in the weeks and months ahead, as we seek to give all of our children the education that will allow them to make the most of their abilities and to become productive members of our society.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

BC/LIJ/RSM/RLM/DWB/RLM/bws-jfc-lynn-efr
(2.chase.b)

(Corres. #3343675)

cc: w/inc Mike Cohen, 218
cc: Bill Kincaid, DOEd

March 10, 1997

Mr. Ira Glasser
Executive Director
Washington Office
American Civil Liberties Union
122 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

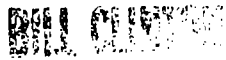
Dear Ira:

I enjoyed reading your article regarding school vouchers. Your articulate defense of public schools and the importance of safeguarding their funding reflects my own opposition to tuition vouchers for private elementary and secondary schools, whether funded at the local, state, or federal level.

As your article notes, vouchers would divert critical dollars from neighborhood public schools that are already short on resources in order to send a few selected students to private schools -- schools that are not publicly accountable. In addition, voucher proposals may distract long-term attention from the hard work of reform needed to change failing schools into good schools and good schools into outstanding schools.

I believe that we should move beyond this divisive debate and work together to ensure that every student, no matter where he or she lives, can attend a public school that is safe and academically challenging. This means higher expectations for all of our students. It means that teachers and principals must be accountable for student performance, and that states and communities should have the ability to intervene effectively in failing schools. And it means that we must build strong partnerships among schools, families, and communities that make education everybody's top priority.

I'm truly grateful for your commitment, and I have shared your article with my staff in the Domestic Policy Council.

Sincerely, 
BC/LIJ/RLM/lynn-ckb (Corres. #3389301)
(3.glasser.i)

cc: ~~Mike Cohen~~, 218 OEOB
cc: Scott Michaud, 94 OEOB
cc: Bruce Reed, 2FL/WW, w/copy of incoming
cc: Maria Echaveste, 2FL/WW, w/copy of incoming
Xeroxed copy of personally signed original to NH through
Todd Stern
CLEAR THRU TODD STERN
PRESIDENT TO SIGN

DRAFT

Robert F. Chase
President
National Education Association

Dear Robert:

Thank you for your letter regarding my position on private school vouchers. I know this is an issue of serious concern to your members across the country, as it is to me.

As you know, this Administration has made improving education our number one priority. Our agenda focuses on the fundamentals of school reform: higher standards, improved reading, better support to improve teaching, greater accountability, improved access to technology for classroom use, and increased parental involvement. In addition, we strongly support greater choice within public education, including publicly accountable charter schools started by teams of teachers and other community members, and are working to spur a substantial increase in school construction so that the growing number of students and their teachers can work together in safe, modern facilities. These initiatives are vital to improving the public schools that serve almost 90% of our nation's schoolchildren. I greatly appreciate the commitment of teachers and the NEA to these efforts, both here in Washington and in our classrooms and communities across the nation.

With respect to vouchers, as I made clear in December, I continue to be opposed to federally funded tuition vouchers for private elementary and secondary schools. I also do not support state- and locally-funded vouchers.

Voucher supporters see them as a magic bullet to solve the challenges currently facing our education system, particularly in our urban areas, but I believe that they are wrong. Controversy over vouchers tends to polarize communities instead of involving them in public school improvement efforts. Vouchers divert critical dollars from neighborhood public schools that are already short on resources, in order to send a few selected students to private schools -- schools that are not publicly accountable for the qualifications or abilities of their teachers, for their educational approach or philosophy, or for student performance. And, ironically, vouchers threaten the independence of the many good private and parochial schools that are an important part of American education. Ultimately, vouchers distract from long-term attention to the hard work of reform that changes failing schools into good schools, and good schools into outstanding schools. They are simply the wrong way to go.

In short, I am opposed to vouchers, and will continue to voice my serious concerns about them. However, under the Tenth Amendment, education remains appropriately under state and local control. If states and localities wish to establish and fund their own, constitutionally valid voucher programs, it is not appropriate for the federal government to seek to erect legal barriers that prevent them from doing so.

In my view, however, all of us should move beyond this divisive debate about vouchers and work together to insure that every student, no matter where he or she lives, can attend a public school that is safe and challenging academically. As I recently stressed in my speech to the First

in the World consortium, this means higher expectations for all of our students. It means that teachers and principals must be accountable for student performance, and that states and communities should have the ability to intervene effectively in failing schools. And it means that we must form and strengthen strong partnerships among schools, families, and communities that make education everybody's top priority.

I look forward to working with you and your members in the weeks and months ahead, as we seek to give every child the education needed to make the most of his or her God-given abilities and to become a productive member of our society.

Sincerely,



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Robert E. Chase, President
Reg Weaver, Vice President
Marilyn Monahan, Secretary-Treasurer
Don Cameron, Executive Director

1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-3290
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Executive Office

December 18, 1996

The Honorable Bill Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Our members listened with great interest to your recent comments on tuition vouchers, made last week during a press conference. On behalf of the National Education Association, thank you for taking the opportunity to reiterate your opposition to federally funded tuition vouchers at the elementary and secondary level.

You should be aware, however, that as many as 20 state legislatures may consider voucher legislation during the coming year. We are deeply concerned that your remarks supporting the states' legal right to implement vouchers may be politically damaging to our efforts and viewed by many as a sign of your approval of state-sponsored vouchers. We would urge you to reconsider your position and ask that, as you address this issue in the weeks and months ahead, you use the power of your office to oppose vouchers at the local, state, and federal levels.

Thank you for your continued leadership in support of public education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bob".

Bob Chase
President

Remote Addressee

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 13, 1996

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE PRESIDENT

Room 450

Old Executive Office Building

2:00 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

As President, I have worked to keep the American Dream alive for all those who are willing to work for it -- to restore economic growth and to put our nation on the path to long-term prosperity. One of the accomplishments I'm proudest of since 1992 is the way our economic advisors have worked as a team to advance America's interests at home and abroad.

Working together, this team has helped to cut our deficit by 60 percent; increase our investments in education, the environment, and technology; expand America's exports to record levels; and to help our economy create nearly 11 million new jobs.

campaign finance reform legislation. As I said Wednesday in my speech to the DLC, repeated reasonable bills have died by Senate filibuster. Let me tell you, there is always an objection to any bill. There has never been a perfect piece of legislation passed by the Congress. There is always a theoretical or actual objection anybody can raise to any bill. But the time has come to quit killing this by filibuster and to pass it. And I'm prepared to do my part. And we ought to start with the McCain-Feingold bill. It's a good bill, it's a reasonable bill, it's a bipartisan bill, and we ought to pass it. And we should amend it to make the foreign contributions not legal anymore.

Mara.

Q Mr. President, when you begin your campaign to improve public education in this country, are you going to follow up on a suggestion that you made in the first presidential debate, which is to encourage states and cities to offer vouchers for private school choice?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe I made that suggestion.

Q You said that states and cities should be allowed to do it.

THE PRESIDENT: No -- well, I've always thought they should be allowed to do it. I supported Milwaukee's right to do it. But I'm not going to encourage or discourage. I think it should be made based on the facts of the case. I am opposed to the federal government doing it. Our aid is too limited and it is too targeted and it is too much needed for what is done now. And if I were at the state and local level, I would not be in favor of it because I think the schools are underfunded. I don't think they're overfunded. But I do believe that they have the legal right to do it and I don't support any action to take that legal right away from them. And if they think the situation is totally out of hand and they want to try what they did in Milwaukee, I think they ought to have the right to do it.

Q This is along the same lines. You talked, over the course of your presidency a lot about college accessibility, affordability, tuition credits, et cetera, but there are festering problems at the secondary and elementary levels across this country probably nowhere more pronounced than in this very city. Do you have any initiatives or programs in mind that can reform, if not rescue, the public schools of America?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the rescue of the public schools of America will have to be done by the people who are in control of them. We do fundamentally have local control of our schools and under the constitutions of virtually every state in the country, the states are constitutionally responsible for them. So when you hear people say they want local control and they don't like all these federal rules, the truth is, we do have local control.

The federal contribution to public education is about 7 cents on the dollar; never been higher than 10 cents on the dollar. But there are things that we can do and that I believe we should do. First of all, I think we should support reform efforts. That's why I have supported things like public school choice and charter schools. We have in this balanced budget plan sufficient funds for 3,000 charter schools which would triple the number of schools created under the umbrella of local school districts, but without a lot of the rules and regulations which I think make real learning more difficult, with more control for the parents and the principals and the teachers in each school.

Secondly, I think we should support the establishment in every state of national standards of excellence and means of measuring it. And one of the things I think we should do more of where I think we have not -- let me back up and say, when we did the education summit in 1989 with President Bush, and the governors all came together and stayed up all night and wrote the National Education Goals, if you read the document that goes with the goals we wrote, we were moving to deal with what was a really tough issue.

Keep in mind, this is now a 13-year effort in our country, starting back -- going back to the Nation At Risk Report in early '83, when we said our schools are in trouble, we need more math, we need more science, we need more foreign language, we need higher standards, we need better-paid, better-trained and more accountable teachers -- all those things that came out in '83.

So then, all of the states worked on that. So about '89, we could see that the problem was, you can always have more and better of anything, but what is the goal here. And that's why the National Educational Goals were adopted, so we would have some way or measuring whether we were succeeding.

But we all understood that even though we wanted state constitutional responsibility and local control, that our children were going to be judged by global standards. And the next step is

plainly to devise -- not federal government, but national standards of excellence. We got there in mathematics and science -- there actually are pretty widely-accepted mathematics and science standards -- at the high school level and, to some extent, at the junior high school level.

There was all the controversy over the history standards. Do you remember that, right after I took office? They were not developed in our administration, but they were presented then. I still think we can achieve standards in the arts. And then I believe there has to be a nationally recognized means of testing kids so that we know by some more or less universal standards whether our kids know what they're supposed to know. And I think that we should work very hard on that -- not government standards, but national standards. And I think unless we're prepared to hold all of our kids up to the light of real measurement, we'll never know and we'll never succeed in having a genuine national education system.

Q Mr. President, in the last election the Democratic Party raised more money than it ever had before. Do you think you put too much pressure on your fundraisers, and do you take any sort of personal responsibility for the problems and the embarrassments that subsequently developed?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, yes, I think any of us who were involved in it have to take some responsibility. I certainly do. But let me say that I did everything I could to make it clear that I wanted the law followed to the last letter. I wanted every T crossed, every I dotted.

In our campaign, Lyn Utrecht and others rigorously checked every check that came in. But I feel very badly that there were some funds received which should not have been received. Some of them were illegal. Some of them were not illegal, but on better judgment would dictate that they not be received. I also believe it's a disservice to the more than -- to the 99 percent of the people plus and the more than 98 percent of the contributions that the Democratic Party received that were perfectly legal and perfectly appropriate.

I talked with the President about an hour ago about the debate. We discussed this private school voucher issue, since we had some inquiries on this question. He told me that, regarding private school vouchers, there is nothing new in his position as presented last night.

The President supports giving families and students more choices in public education, and the best example of that is funding for charter schools (3000 in his balanced budget over 7 years).

But the President opposes the use of Federal funds for private school vouchers.

For other than Federal funds, these are state and local decisions; but the President said he personally would not support a voucher plan that either was unconstitutional or that would shift funds from public schools to private schools. In 1993 in California, he said: "... if I were a citizen of the state of California, I would not vote for Proposition 174, The Private Voucher Initiative."

That was his position before the debate, during the debate, and that is his position after the debate.

I might add that the Federal government helps poor children regardless of where they go to school -- in such programs as Title I and the school lunch program. We stood up against the Republican Congress when they tried to take funds away from those programs.

The President has been a leader in support of education and has made it a national priority at every level.

- Richard Riley

jdonaldson

Sun Oct 13 14:55 page 2

the federal Treasury will go to Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, and pensions, if we do nothing. You are willing to acknowledge that we are going to have to change Medicare and Social Security for those two systems to survive?

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, first of all, the president has put forward a balanced budget plan. We have reduced the deficit for four years in a row. We promised to cut it by 50 percent. We've cut it by 60 percent. We are going to balance the budget, and we will do so in a way that protects Medicare and Medicaid and the important investments we have emphasized, which are so important to building that bridge to the 21st century that we talk about so much. We think that is important, and we'll do so in a way that makes certain that the entitlement issue is addressed responsibly and that the Social Security and Medicare systems are protected.

MR. RUSSERT: We have to take another quick break. We'll be back with more of our discussion here with Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic candidate for vice president, after this.

(Announcements.)

MR. RUSSERT: More on "Meet the Press" right after this station break. More of Al Gore.

(Announcements.)

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Vice President, in the last presidential debate, a lot of people were confused about President Clinton's comments on education. He had always said he was against vouchers, he was against providing people a choice of going to public -- public or private school and funded by the government. Let me show you a tape from President Clinton's debate performance.

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NBC "MEET THE PRESS"/GORE

PAGE 19

10/13/96

.STX

(Begin videotaped segment.)

PRES. CLINTON: If we're going to have a private voucher plan, that ought to be done at the local level or at the state level. If a local school district in Cleveland or any place else wants to have a private school choice plan like Milwaukee did, let them have at it.

(End videotaped segment.)

MR. RUSSERT: So if a city or a state wants to have a voucher system where people would go to a private or public school and it would be funded by the government, you have no problem, according to the president.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, what he meant was that local governments that have submitted this to a referendum have seen them defeated every time the voters have had a chance to vote on it and to speak on it. In some communities, you have seen totally private, nongovernmental funds used to set up a voucher system. That is fine. There's no constitutional problem, there's no problem with it.

But we are opposed -- let me make it clear -- we are opposed to siphoning public funds away from public schools in order to finance private schools.

MR. RUSSERT: That's not the impression the president left.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, if you got a different impression from that, it was not intended. We do not support the use of public funds in ways that siphon them away from public schools.

And the reason why is 90 percent of the schoolchildren in America go to public schools, and we need to strengthen and lift up our public school system, respecting and highly valuing the private schools that exist in the country and play a tremendous role.

But where public funds are concerned, they ought to be going to public schools, the education budget that comes from public funds.

The magazine Policy Review reports that in October 1990, then-Governor Clinton wrote a letter discussing Milwaukee's new school voucher program, called the "Parental Choice Program." In the letter, addressed to voucher supporter Polly Williams, the Governor is reported to have stated: "I'm fascinated by that proposal.... I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by the status quo." See D. McGroarty, "Education's Long March," Policy Review (Summer 1994) (quoting Governor Clinton's letter).

During the 1992 campaign, however, the President opposed school vouchers. The New York Times reported on October 23, 1992, that candidate Clinton "dismisses the free-market model, saying that using [school] vouchers would amount to using public money for private schools. He and other critics fear that vouchers would skim off the best students with the savviest parents for private schools, leaving the public schools with handicapped, disruptive or neglected students." See S. Chira, "The 1992 Campaign: Issues/Education," New York Times (Oct. 23, 1992), p. A22.

In October 1992, Newsweek also reported candidate Clinton's "unalterable" opposition to school vouchers: "The governor supports choice within public schools, but is 'unalterably opposed' to vouchers because he would rather put the money into improving the public system; both major teachers' unions back him." See B. Kantrowitz and P. Wingert, "Different Choices on School Choice," Newsweek (Oct. 19, 1992), p. 32.

President Clinton reiterated his opposition to school vouchers in an October 1993 address to the AFL-CIO convention in San Francisco. Discussing California's Proposition 174, the "Private Voucher Initiative," the President stated, "if I were a citizen of the State of California, I would not vote for Proposition 174." The President also said: "I have spent 12 years before I became President overwhelmingly obsessed with reform of the public school system, wanting more choices in the system, wanting more accountability, wanting more flexibility about how schools were organized and established and operated. But I can tell you that this [school vouchers] is not the way to get it done, and the people will regret this if they pass it." (Copy of President's remarks attached.)

100-443887-100

By Judd Hambrick, Wkyc-TV; Cleveland, OH

Office of the Press Secretary

October 31, 1994

David Lawrence Convention Center
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

4:22 P.M. Est

Q Mr. President, this is Judd Hambrick, in Cleveland.
How are you?

The President: Hello, Judd. I'm fine, thank you.

Q I know your topic today is loans for college education, but we have a major school levee in Cleveland to vote on next week, basically asking taxpayers to pay more money to improve public education. And more than just a few are sick of paying more money and not really getting the quality education they think they deserve. And some are suggesting localized alternatives. How do you feel about local school choice, like, for instance, the voucher system?

The President: Well, let me tell you what we have supported and I'll answer that question, too. But in this last session of Congress we had the best time for education probably in 30 years -- middle class college loans, which you know about; but also apprenticeships for young people who don't go to college. And we passed some very important legislation for the public schools which sets out some national standards, but emphasizes grass-roots reforms.

And we support things like public school choice; districts chartering people to set up their own schools within the public school system; district hiring management firms, private firms to run their schools. Now, if they want to go beyond that to some sort of private voucher system -- Milwaukee has tried that with very mixed results. I think that ought to be a local decision based on evidence in a particular place that it's really needed. I do not believe the national government should be out there advocating that, because most public school systems are not overfunded, given the problems they have.

Excerpts from President's speech--on school
vouchers

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(San Francisco, California)

For Immediate Release

October 4, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE AFL-CIO 20TH CONVENTION

San Francisco Hilton
San Francisco, California

We have learned these things. And if I might, since we're in California, say a special word -- therefore, I believe that having worked for 12 years for higher standards, more choices and greater changes in public education, I'm in a little bit of a position to say that if I were a citizen of the state of California, I would not vote for Proposition 174, The Private Voucher Initiative. (Applause.)

Now, and let me tell you why. Let me tell you why. First of all, keep in mind a lot of the schools out here are doing a good job. I can say -- you know, I never was part of the California education system. I have studied this system out here for more than a decade. They have undertaken a lot of very impressive reforms and many of their schools are doing a good job. I was interviewed last night by two people from a newspaper in Sacramento, and one of them just volunteered that he had two children in the public schools there and they were getting a terrific education.

This bill would start by taking \$1.3 billion right of the top to send a check to people who already have their kids in private schools, and who didn't need any government money to do it, and taking it right of the top away from a school system that doesn't have enough money to educate the kids it's got in it in the first place. (Applause.)

Second thing it would do is to impose no real standards on the quality of the programs which could be funded: Who could set up a school, what standards they'd have to meet, what tests the kids would have to pass. Just take your voucher and who cares whether a private school is a legitimate school or not. That is a significant issue. And all you have to do is to work in this field for a few years to understand that that is a significant issue.

Wouldn't it be ironic that at the very moment we're finally trying to find a way to measure the performance and raise the standards of the public schools, we turn around and start sending tax money to private schools that didn't have to meet any standards at all. (Applause.) When we're trying to get one part of our business, we're going to make the other part worse.

And finally, let me just say, I have always supported the notion that American schools ought to have competition, and the fact that we have a vibrant tradition of pluralistic education and private schools and religious private schools was a good thing, not a bad thing for America. But all the years when I grew up, and all the times I saw that, and for a couple years of my life when I was a little boy, when I went to a Catholic school, when my folks moved from one place to another and we lived way out in the country and didn't know much about the schools in the new area where we were -- no one ever thought that the church would want any money from the taxpayers to run their schools. In fact, they said just the opposite, we don't

So I think we have to really thing through -- I have spent 12 years before I became President overwhelmingly obsessed with reform of the public school system, wanting more choices in the system, wanting more accountability, wanting more flexibility about how schools were organized and established and operated. But I can tell you that this is not the way to get it done and the people will regret this if they pass it. I hope the people of California don't do that. (Applause.)

Now, you can educate people all you want -- and I wanted to say a little more about that. The Labor Secretary and I are working on trying to take all these 150 different government training programs and give local communities and states the power to consolidate them, working with you, and just fund the things that work on a state-by-state basis, and to set up a system of lifetime education and training.

The president's about-face on school choice

By Mark R. Levin

In 1990, Gov. Bill Clinton wrote Wisconsin State Rep. Polly Williams — a Democrat from Milwaukee, Wisc. and a longtime leader in the school choice movement — encouraging her efforts to pass a school choice bill in the Wisconsin legislature. He wrote, in part, "I am fascinated by [your school choice bill] and am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by status quo."

As president, Mr. Clinton is now in charge of the very "Democratic Party establishment" he once criticized. But instead of using his high office to embrace "visionary" school reformers — who are battling in places like Milwaukee to expand the

nation's first major voucher program, or who are defending the privatization of a once hopelessly failing public elementary school in Wilkesburg, Pa. — he has joined the anti-reform union bosses at the National Education Association (NEA) who are largely responsible for today's educational crisis.

Mr. Clinton's Arkansas-to-Washington reversal can only be explained by political expediency. The NEA, which fights virtually every serious school reform effort in the country, has enormous political muscle and vast resources. It is a major player in the Democratic Party involved in a host of political issues having nothing to do with education — such as abortion and the North American Free Trade Agreement — and the president is counting on the NEA delivering most of its 2.2 million votes on election day. School-age children, on the other hand, cannot vote.

Despite abandoning school reform, Mr. Clinton now stands before the electorate masquerading as the real education president. He proposes school uniforms. So, many of our public schools will be populated with well-dressed children who can't read, write or compute. (Besides, Mr. Clinton doesn't

have the power to enforce a dress code on local schools districts.) The president's Education Department developed national educational standards, which he claims will increase the quality of educa-

tion. But the standards are, in many respects, shockingly anti-American and ahistorical. And, of course, Mr. Clinton says he supports more federal funding for public schools. But the president could double the present federal budget for elemen-

tary and secondary education and it won't have a discernable impact on classroom learning.

Anyone who pays ever-increasing local taxes, which is most of us, is well aware that the overwhelming majority of public school funding is raised at the local and state level. Moreover, if we've learned anything the last three decades it's that more spending and higher taxes won't fix the public school system. It primarily funds the same educational bureaucracy and empowers the same union bosses. What's needed is competition.

The public school system is a government-protected, government-run monopoly. It cannot educate or even guarantee the safety of huge numbers of children, particularly those residing in the inner cities, who are entrusted to it.

If we demand competition in the production of goods and services such as steel, automobiles, oil and computers, why do we tolerate less when it comes to educating our children? The market system works. It has created the most powerful and compassionate economic system in world history — the American economy. Yet we reject these very principles when it comes to developing our most precious resource, the next generation.

Many of the loudest voices opposing even modest competitive alternatives to the present public school

system send their own children to private schools. President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, and Sen. Ted Kennedy, the chief cheerleaders for the status quo, chose private schools for their children. Indeed, according to a study of 1990 census data published by the Center for Education Reform, the percentage of public school teachers in America's cities who enroll their children in private schools is staggering. Consider these figures: Boston (44.6 percent); Cleveland (39.7 percent); San Francisco (36.7 percent); Chicago (36.3 percent); Philadelphia (35.9 percent); and Pittsburgh (35.4 percent).

The president and his NEA patrons are the new segregationists — education segregationists, if you will. They have created legal and policy obstacles intended to deny poor and low- to middle-income families the same school choices they freely exercised on behalf of their own children. They now stand in the doorways of our most crime-ridden and failing public schools, preventing perhaps millions of school children from acquiring a quality education at alternative public or private schools.

President Clinton isn't protecting education, as he likes to say. He's defending a public school system that leaves too many kids uneducated and too many dreams destroyed. It's time to speak up for the children, Mr. President.

Mark R. Levin is president of Landmark Legal Foundation. He was deputy assistant secretary for a elementary and secondary education during the Reagan Administration. Landmark is presently helping defend school choice initiatives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania.

Clinton Position on Private Vouchers

By Mark Pitsch

Washington

Debated

The Clinton administration moved swiftly last week to reassure education lobbyists and the public that its position on vouch-

ELECTION '96

ers had not changed despite the president's remarks on the subject during his Oct. 6 debate with GOP challenger Bob Dole.

In discussing school choice and the federal role in education during the first of the two 1996 presidential debates, President Clinton said that while he opposes federally funded vouchers of the kind Mr. Dole has proposed, the creation of voucher programs that include private and religious schools is largely a state and local responsibility.

"If you're going to have a private voucher plan, that ought to be determined by states and localities where they're raising and spending most of the money," Mr. Clinton said.

The president repeated that sentiment three times, concluding with specific references to high-profile voucher experiments.

"If a local school district in

Cleveland, or anyplace else, wants to have a private school choice plan, like Milwaukee did, let them have at it," he said.

It was the first time Mr. Clinton appeared to suggest that his opposition to vouchers is contingent on their primary source of funding. While Mr. Dole did not pick up on

it during the debate, observers began to wonder whether Mr. Clinton had changed his position. Over the years, Mr. Clinton has supported school choice within the public system, but has drawn the line at voucher-style programs

that include private schools.

But the White House and Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley insisted last week that there had been no change.

"I talked to the president and I told him I had some questions about the voucher issue, and he told me that there is nothing new in his position," Mr. Riley told reporters last week.

Mr. Riley noted that the president had spoken out against a failed 1993 California ballot initiative that would have installed a statewide voucher program.

And he said the administration opposes voucher plans at any level that are unconstitutional or that shift money to private schools and away from public schools.

Several Readings

Nevertheless, Mr. Clinton's remarks were squishy enough to be open to numerous interpretations.

Voucher proponents cheered.

"The Clinton response was extremely significant," said Chester E. Finn Jr., a senior fellow at the Washington office of the Hudson

Institute, an Indianapolis-based conservative think tank, and an informal adviser to the Dole campaign. "If the nation's leading Democrat has decided that vouchers are a state and local matter rather than the end of the world as we know it, we've reached a watershed of sorts."

Moreover, proponents noted that the president, while calling studies of the Milwaukee program "ambiguous," did not denounce state and local voucher efforts.

"He didn't say they should go do it. ... But he didn't criticize vouch-

ers in concept or in practice," said Tim Sullivan, the spokesman for the Center for Education Reform, a Washington group that supports vouchers.

Some voucher opponents said they were dismayed, but said they hoped the president himself would clarify his stance on the issue, possibly in the second debate, scheduled for this week. In the meantime, they were satisfied with Mr. Riley's explanation.

"Initially, I needed to make sure that he had not backed away from his beliefs and commitments," Robert F. Chase, the president of the 2.2 million-member National Education Association, said in an interview. "The sense I get is that if it comes up again, he will clearly state that if a voucher would undermine public education, he would oppose it."

More...

Clinton Voucher Remarks Seen As Ambiguous

8

Continued • • •

For leading the charge against vouchers at all levels of government, the NEA has come under criticism from Mr. Dole for blocking what he considers a promising school reform.

Other voucher opponents said Mr. Clinton is prone to criticism no matter what he says on the issue.

If the president had "come down hard against state and local voucher plans, I wonder if the headline from the voucher proponents would be: Federal government controls local decisionmaking," said Maribeth Oakes, the assistant director of government relations for the National PTA.

Calculated Words?

Others wondered whether Mr. Clinton's comments were deliberate.

An administration official said the words were not scripted.

But others thought Mr. Clinton was making his latest pitch to appeal to more conservative voters.

"President Clinton is a constitutional scholar. He has too much background in education to make an offhand remark on the most controversial issue in education," said Mark Weston, the state-services coordinator for the Education Commission of the States in Denver.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION • OCTOBER 18, 1996

P-29

Contract Awarded to Service Direct Loans

HAVE the U.S. Department of Education and the United Student Aid Funds Inc., the nation's largest guarantor of student loans, declared détente?

The Education Department surprised fans of both the guaranteed-loan program and direct lending when it announced last week that it had hired the company that runs USA Funds to be one of three new loan servicers for the direct-loan program. Loan servicers collect payments from borrowers and seek to insure that they do not default.

The department will pay the company about \$350-million over seven years.

The Education Department and guarantee agencies such as USA Funds have been at odds over control of the student-loan market. The banks and agencies that dominate the traditional guaranteed-

loan system have opposed the department's direct-lending program, which provides federal loan funds directly to students.

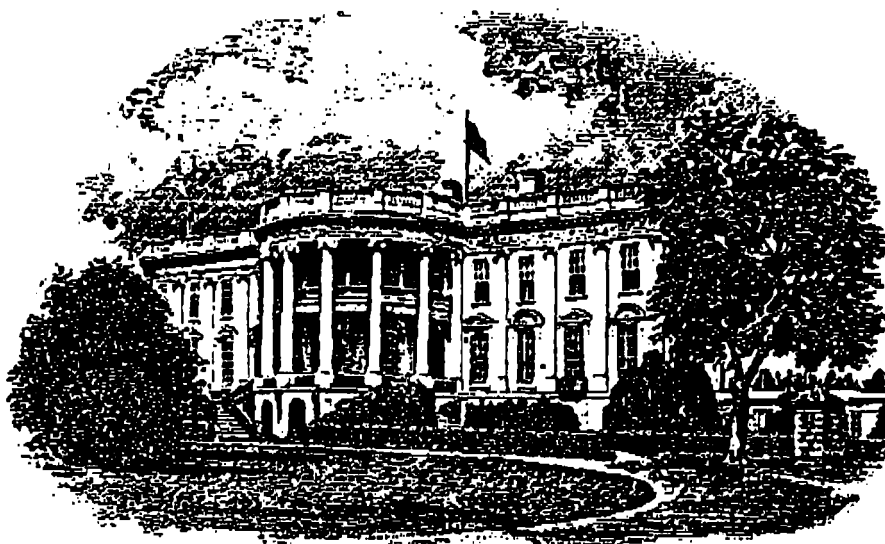
In addition, the Education Department has often criticized the guarantee agencies, including USA Funds, for failing to adequately prevent student borrowers from defaulting on their loans.

But Susan O'Connor, a spokeswoman for USA Funds, said the department had turned to the company because it was looking for contractors with "a good track record of collecting loans."

The company sought the contract, she said, despite its continuing opposition to direct lending.

"We will continue to be strong advocates for the guaranteed-loan program, but we decided that all students deserve good servicing, no matter what loan program they are in," she said. —STEPHEN BURD

The White House
Office of Presidential Letters and Messages



facsimile from: Leanne Johnson
phone: 202-456-5512
fax: 202-456-5426

To: BOB KINCAID
No. of pages (including cover): 2 Date: 1.9.97
Phone: _____ FAX: 401 4353

Comments: CHASE INCOMING RE: VOUCHERS
FOR TACKLING POINTS / LANGUAGE
Thanks!

jdonaldson Sun Oct 13 14:55 page 2

the federal Treasury will go to Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, and pensions, if we do nothing. You are willing to acknowledge that we are going to have to change Medicare and Social Security for those two systems to survive?

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, first of all, the president has put forward a balanced budget plan. We have reduced the deficit for four years in a row. We promised to cut it by 50 percent. We've cut it by 60 percent. We are going to balance the budget, and we will do so in a way that protects Medicare and Medicaid and the important investments we have emphasized, which are so important to building that bridge to the 21st century that we talk about so much. We think that is important, and we'll do so in a way that makes certain that the entitlement issue is addressed responsibly and that the Social Security and Medicare systems are protected.

MR. RUSSERT: We have to take another quick break. We'll be back with more of our discussion here with Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic candidate for vice president, after this.

(Announcements.)

MR. RUSSERT: More on "Meet the Press" right after this station break. More of Al Gore.

(Announcements.)

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Vice President, in the last presidential debate, a lot of people were confused about President Clinton's comments on education. He had always said he was against vouchers, he was against providing people a choice of going to public -- public or private school and funded by the government. Let me show you a tape from President Clinton's debate performance.

.ETX

NBC "MEET THE PRESS"/GORE

PAGE 19

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.STX

(Begin videotaped segment.)

PRES. CLINTON: If we're going to have a private voucher plan, that ought to be done at the local level or at the state level. If a local school district in Cleveland or any place else wants to have a private school choice plan like Milwaukee did, let them have at it.

(End videotaped segment.)

MR. RUSSERT: So if a city or a state wants to have a voucher system where people would go to a private or public school and it would be funded by the government, you have no problem, according to the president.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, what he meant was that local governments that have submitted this to a referendum have seen them defeated every time the voters have had a chance to vote on it and to speak on it. In some communities, you have seen totally private, nongovernmental funds used to set up a voucher system. That is fine. There's no constitutional problem, there's no problem with it.

But we are opposed -- let me make it clear -- we are opposed to siphoning public funds away from public schools in order to finance private schools.

MR. RUSSERT: That's not the impression the president left.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, if you got a different impression from that, it was not intended. We do not support the use of public funds in ways that siphon them away from public schools.

And the reason why is 90 percent of the schoolchildren in America go to public schools, and we need to strengthen and lift up our public school system, respecting and highly valuing the private schools that exist in the country and play a tremendous role.

But where public funds are concerned, they ought to be going to public schools, the education budget that comes from public funds.

The End of the Debate on School Choice

By CHESTER E. FINN JR.

Bill Clinton uttered the words "education" and "school" 43 times in Sunday's debate, Bob Dole 30 times. Seventy-three mentions in 90 minutes suggests that the issue looms large in this race, at least in the candidates' minds and mouths. Perhaps not coincidentally, opinion surveys also indicate that voters rank education near the top of their concerns.

The Republican and Democratic platforms clash sharply on what to do about the nation's mediocre schools and semiliterate young people. Yet judging by the presidential debate, only two differences amount to much: whether Washington should subsidize vouchers ("opportunity scholarships," Mr. Dole calls them) for low-income children to attend private schools, and whether to abolish the Education Department. And even the Education Department debate is largely symbolic. What counts are the department's 250-odd programs costing \$31 billion. Though voters may not realize it, many of those programs antedate the department's 1979 birth and all of them could outlive it.

A real debate over the federal role in education would be worth having, though the odds of that happening by Nov. 5 are slim. The truth is that much of the taxpayers' money is wasted, many of the federal programs are ineffective, and some of them hamstring today's truly promising education reforms, such as the higher standards, charter schools and voucher experiments that a lot of states and communities are undertaking. Mr. Clinton's oft-voiced support for charter schools, for example, is

belied by screwy federal-funding formulas and red tape. State standards run afoul of hyperactive civil rights enforcers.

Why didn't Mr. Dole point all this out? Because Mr. Clinton and his minions have succeeded masterfully over the past two years in turning the sums one is prepared to spend on those Great Society programs into a litmus test of one's concern for education. Nothing (save perhaps Medicare) better illustrates the Democrats' capacity to equate dollars with compassion.

Yet we've known for 30 years that pumping more money into schools does not boost pupil achievement, although some things that would make for better schools do carry pricetags. And a shelf of studies has made plain that the big federal education programs simply do not accomplish their purposes. Of the largest among them, the program that purports to provide "compensatory" education to poor youngsters, Mr. Clinton's own Education De-

partment finds "the progress of . . . participants . . . no better than that of non-participants with similar backgrounds."

Yet voicing even the faintest doubt about the value of these outlays—much less trimming or revamping programs—instantly gets translated into being "against education." The White House has been shrewd and dogged in this, eagerly abetted by its friends in the teacher unions and the school establishment. Thus the closing days of the congressional session turned into a bidding war to lavish funds on those old programs; the Education Department's final appropriation for fiscal 1997 surpassed even Mr. Clinton's request by \$1 billion. Programs that GOP leaders

once pledged to scrap, like Goals 2000, won increases. Even the outrageously misguided bilingual education program has about 50% more to spend this year than last. Nothing was block-granted, nothing devolved, nothing voucherized. Now Mr. Dole has endorsed this capitulation, explaining to the nation that he really does favor these programs, wouldn't dream of cutting their budgets, will pay for his "scholarship" scheme out of savings from the Education Department overhead, not its programs. It seems the federal role in education won't be changed no matter who wins next month.

But Sunday's debate also revealed a big policy victory for Mr. Dole's side—and for the parents of 50 million American schoolchildren. Mr. Dole didn't make anything of it, but it's profoundly significant: Mr. Clinton offered no principled argument against school vouchers.

Sure, he huffed and puffed about not diverting federal education dollars into them. But he said—three times—that he favors more school choice. And he said—also thrice—that if states and communities want to include private schools, that's their business. To quote only one of his unambiguous statements: "If a local school district in Cleveland, or any place else, wants to have a private school choice plan, like Milwaukee did, let them have at it."

Yes, yes, I know. This isn't the first time that Bill Clinton has talked right while governing left. Just six months ago, back in his "era of big government is over" phase, he delivered an address to the governors' education summit that Ronald Reagan could happily have uttered. Yet

his Education Department continues to behave as if LBJ were in office.

That, of course, is why American education would be better off without the department and most of its programs. But it's also why Mr. Clinton's decision to leave vouchers to state and community judgment could unexpectedly turn out to be more of a boost for school choice even than Mr. Dole's scholarship plan. Uncle Sam really does tend to mess up almost everything he touches in education; and most of the important decisions really are made—and the money spent—by states and localities. Mr. Dole's scheme is a good one, as federal programs go. But a decision by the nation's top Democrat to cease arguing against private school choice says that the argument over philosophy is over—and that choice proponents have won. That's more important to the future of U.S. education than the missed opportunity to debate the federal role; more important than \$31 billion ill-spent dollars; more important than the cabinet department.

Consolidating this victory won't be easy, though. It'll take many rounds in city halls and statehouses around the country, places where Mr. Clinton's union pals can be counted on to continue fighting tooth and nail. But now, at least, their self-interest will be naked; the president has thrown away their fig leaf. Thank you, Bob Dole, for causing that to happen. Thank you, Bill Clinton, for saying the right thing this time whether you believe it or not.

Mr. Finn is a fellow at the Hudson Institute. He served as assistant secretary of education in the Reagan administration.

10-7-96

I talked with the President about an hour ago about the debate. We discussed this private school voucher issue, since we had some inquiries on this question. He told me that, regarding private school vouchers, there is nothing new in his position as presented last night.

The President supports giving families and students more choices in public education, and the best example of that is funding for charter schools (3000 in his balanced budget over 7 years).

But the President opposes the use of Federal funds for private school vouchers.

For other than Federal funds, these are state and local decisions; but the President said he personally would not support a voucher plan that either was unconstitutional or that would shift funds from public schools to private schools. In 1993 in California, he said: "... if I were a citizen of the state of California, I would not vote for Proposition 174, The Private Voucher Initiative."

That was his position before the debate, during the debate, and that is his position after the debate.

I might add that the Federal government helps poor children regardless of where they go to school -- in such programs as Title I and the school lunch program. We stood up against the Republican Congress when they tried to take funds away from those programs.

The President has been a leader in support of education and has made it a national priority at every level.

- Richard Riley

Mara.

Q Mr. President, when you begin your campaign to improve public education in this country, are you going to follow up on a suggestion that you made in the first presidential debate, which is to encourage states and cities to offer vouchers for private school choice?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe I made that suggestion.

Q You said that states and cities should be allowed to do it.

THE PRESIDENT: No -- well, I've always thought they should be allowed to do it. I supported Milwaukee's right to do it. But I'm not going to encourage or discourage. I think it should be made based on the facts of the case. I am opposed to the federal government doing it. Our aid is too limited and it is too targeted and it is too much needed for what is done now. And if I were at the state and local level, I would not be in favor of it because I think the schools are underfunded. I don't think they're overfunded. But I do believe that they have the legal right to do it and I don't support any action to take that legal right away from them. And if they think the situation is totally out of hand and they want to try what they did in Milwaukee, I think they ought to have the right to do it.

DRAFT

DRAFT

DRAFT

M E M O

TO: Terry Peterson

CC: Mike Smith
Jon Schnur

FROM: Bill Kincaid

DATE: March 17, 1996

RE: Clinton Letter to Polly Williams

You have asked me to research Bill Clinton's 1990 letter to Wisconsin State Representative Polly Williams. Here is what I have found out, and some related thoughts:

The Letter

On October 15, 1990, then-Gov. Clinton wrote Rep. Williams, the author of Wisconsin's original Milwaukee voucher legislation. The entire text (attached) is as follows:

Dear Polly:

I read Don Lambro's recent column about your version of the school choice bill in Milwaukee. I am fascinate by that proposal an am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by the status quo.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

[Bill Clinton]

The letter came up in the 1992 campaign. A September 27, 1990 Washington Times article quoted Rep. Williams as saying:

I was surprised that he was taking that stand [against private school vouchers] because that was not the stand that he took with me in his letter. I was disappointed. He definitely gave me the feeling in his letter that he strongly supported me. And he didn't indicate otherwise in subsequent meetings we had.

More recently, Williams and others have used the letter and Chelsea's attendance at Sidwell

to argue that "Bill Clinton shouldn't be the only person in public housing to send his kid to private school."

The Column

There seems not to have been any incoming letter. Rather, Clinton was apparently responding to Donald Lambro's September 27, 1990 column, "Political Shifts on Education's Battlefield." The column describes a Sept. 17, 1990 event in DC, attended by many conservative activists, celebrating Williams' success enacting the Milwaukee legislation. According to the column, the event marked the third week of the Milwaukee program.

The column states Williams "won enactment of her school choice program in the face of bitter opposition from the educational establishment, scorn from liberal white Democratic lawmakers, deep hostility from the local news media, and benign neglect from her national party." The column singles out the NAACP, "liberal congressional Democrats" like Sen. Kennedy, and Ron Brown. The column also says "some support is now being heard from [the D.L.C.] whose . . . magazine features a piece on Polly Williams' plan."¹

The 1992 Response

During the 1992 campaign, Clinton took the position that he supported public school choice, but opposed private school vouchers/tax credits. Talking points were developed (and apparently used -- at least they are reflected in an October, 1992 USA Today article) with respect to the Williams letter, although it does not appear that anything written was ever distributed to the press on this topic.

The 1992 response was that Clinton's letter did not indicate his support for private school vouchers, that he never supported vouchers because they drain funds from public schools. Rather, Clinton has supported creative thinking about and innovative approaches to education reform -- and did so in the letter. It was also stressed that under Clinton's leadership, Arkansas was among the first states to allow parents to choose among public schools. Bottom line: Clinton's letter did not endorse the idea of private school vouchers, but was only encouraging the search for innovation, something that he has consistently advocated.

Additional analysis

The letter says that Clinton is "fascinated" by the proposal and is having his staff "analyze it." That is a far cry from endorsing the policy, much less advocating that it be adopted in Arkansas or nationally. Clinton's clear empathy for Williams' struggle to find local solutions to educational problems does not amount to support for her solution.

¹In my research I also found an Elaine Kamarck opinion piece from New York Newsday, dated April 30, 1990, in which Williams' efforts are lauded.

If congressional voucher advocates press the issue, the President should stand firm on the position he clearly adopted in 1992. As Clarence Page pointed out in a March 14, 1996 column, "Clinton has good reason to be skeptical about vouchers. So do the rest of us." Page notes that, five years after the Milwaukee program was established, the results have been decidedly mixed. Contrasted with anecdotes of individual success stories, two of the 17 Milwaukee schools have failed, and two more are on the "critical list" with severe financial problems. Moreover, as of February, almost 200 out of 1,476 students participating this school year had dropped out of the program since September. Vouchers, Page says "are less a panacea than a last resort. They offer a triage approach, like combat medics who must perform the grim task of deciding who can be saved and who cannot. Vouchers cream off the most fortunate of the least fortunate, the students who have the brightest minds and the most conscientious parents, and leave behind the rest to fend for themselves." The President supports comprehensive education reform to benefit all students, not just a chosen few.

Attachments:

Letter to Polly Williams
Lambro column

03-15-1996 08:49
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501 399 7196
FROM

CLINTON TRANS.

P. 02/08



STATE OF ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State Capitol
Little Rock 72201

Bill Clinton
Governor

OCT 2 8 1996

October 18, 1996

Representative Polly Williams
State Capitol
Room 10 East
P. O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Polly:

I read Don Lambro's recent column about your version of the school choice bill in Milwaukee. I am fascinated by that proposal and am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by status quo.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Bill Clinton in dark ink.

Bill Clinton

BC:stg:12

16TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Washington Times

September 27, 1990, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: Part G; COMMENTARY; Pg. G4

LENGTH: 901 words

HEADLINE: Political shifts on education's battlefield

BYLINE: Donald Lambro; THE WASHINGTON TIMES

BODY:

When Wisconsin state Rep. Polly Williams arrived here last week to celebrate her long but victorious struggle to enact a school choice program for her poor Milwaukee constituents, this town's leading conservatives turned out to greet her as a conquering hero.

It was a scene that would have been politically unimaginable not too many years ago.

Yet as this fiery and highly articulate black Democratic lawmaker, who served as the Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1988 state campaign chairwoman, looked out over the Capitol Hill crowd that cheered her, she must have been struck by the irony of this overwhelmingly right-wing audience warmly embracing her cause.

Despite her dramatic legislative feat which allows children in her poor inner-city district to have the option of attending local private schools, no liberal Democratic leaders were present at the gathering to proclaim their support for her remarkable achievement.

She wasn't surprised. Indeed, she won enactment of her school choice program in the face of bitter opposition from the educational establishment, scorn from liberal white Democratic lawmakers, deep hostility from the local news media and benign neglect from her national party.

The NAACP certainly wasn't there. Her local NAACP chapter teamed up with the teachers unions to try to kill her program. Liberal congressional Democrats like Massachusetts Sen. Edward Kennedy, who profess such compassion for poor minorities, have similarly ignored her efforts. Nor has Democratic National Chairman Ron Brown shown any interest in highlighting her proposal as a model for other inner cities.

The reason: By giving the parents of 1,000 academically eligible black children the choice of entering local private schools to improve their education, her program will inject competition into America's deteriorating public school system. The teacher unions want none of that and the politicians who tow their line aren't going to touch it with a 10-foot pole either.

The Washington Times, September 27, 1990

But along the way her little program - which is now being considered by 14 state legislatures - has won the enthusiastic support of the politically conservative school-choice crowd. And it was this gang that showed up at last week's gala reception, sponsored by the Heritage Foundation and the Landmark Legal Foundation for Civil Rights, to sing her praises and applaud her program as the best way to lift inner-city minorities out of poverty. Vice President Dan Quayle served as honorary chairman of the event.

The list of those who were there to profess their political support for Mrs. Williams' program read like a Who's Who of the Republican right. Among them: former Delaware Gov. Pete du Pont, Wisconsin Sen. Bob Kasten, Rep. Steve Bartlett of Texas, Heritage President Ed Feulner, Robert Woodson, president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, and Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation.

On the left, only Brookings Institution scholar John Chubb is an enthusiastic supporter, though some support is now being heard from the Democratic Leadership Council whose Mainstream Democrat magazine features a piece on Polly Williams' plan.

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The day of Polly Williams' celebration, Sept. 17, marked the third week of the program in which 440 poor Milwaukee kids have chosen an alternative school other than the public school to which they had been assigned. The plan will ultimately provide up to 1,000 low-income students with \$2,500 each in state funds to attend a private, non-sectarian school of their choice, and more are signing up each day.

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He and the teachers unions argue that the Williams plan to help inner-city children will destroy the public schools. But she sees her legislation providing the kind of competition that is needed to force the public schools to improve the services they provide.

"People say we're anti-public school, but we're not," she told her supporters. "We're just leveraging the public schools by telling them that if you don't improve, there will be more choice schools. We're just giving them a little motivation."

Still, while her movement is growing, millions of parents remain unaware of Polly Williams and her idea. It's time she received the national attention she

deserves.

Donald Lambro, chief political correspondent of The Washington Times, is a nationally syndicated columnist.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Polly Williams

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Education chief restates Clinton's voucher view

Education Secretary Richard Riley is working to set the administration's record straight on school vouchers after President Clinton seemed to have a change of heart during the first presidential debate.

Clinton appeared to waffle on his long-held opposition to giving poor families tax money to send their children to private schools. He said Sunday, during the debate with GOP candidate Bob Dole, "If you're going to have a private voucher plan, that ought to be done at the local level or the state level."

Later, he said, "If a local school district in Cleveland, or anyplace else, wants to have a private school choice plan, like Milwaukee did, let them have at it."

Riley says, "There is nothing new in his position. The president supports more choices" within public schools but still opposes tax vouchers for private schools. He added: "The president was talking and thinking, and I think he certainly was saying in his mind exactly what" the position has always been.

By Tamara Henry

DRAFT

DRAFT

DRAFT

M E M O

TO: Terry Peterson

CC: Mike Smith
Jon Schnur

FROM: Bill Kincaid

DATE: March 17, 1996

RE: Clinton Letter to Polly Williams

You have asked me to research Bill Clinton's 1990 letter to Wisconsin State Representative Polly Williams. Here is what I have found out, and some related thoughts:

The Letter

On October 15, 1990, then-Gov. Clinton wrote Rep. Williams, the author of Wisconsin's original Milwaukee voucher legislation. The entire text (attached) is as follows:

Dear Polly:

I read Don Lambro's recent column about your version of the school choice bill in Milwaukee. I am fascinate by that proposal an am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by the status quo.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

[Bill Clinton]

The letter came up in the 1992 campaign. A September 27, 1990 Washington Times article quoted Rep. Williams as saying:

I was surprised that he was taking that stand [against private school vouchers] because that was not the stand that he took with me in his letter. I was disappointed. He definitely gave me the feeling in his letter that he strongly supported me. And he didn't indicate otherwise in subsequent meetings we had.

More recently, Williams and others have used the letter and Chelsea's attendance at Sidwell

to argue that "Bill Clinton shouldn't be the only person in public housing to send his kid to private school."

The Column

There seems not to have been any incoming letter. Rather, Clinton was apparently responding to Donald Lambro's September 27, 1990 column, "Political Shifts on Education's Battlefield." The column describes a Sept. 17, 1990 event in DC, attended by many conservative activists, celebrating Williams' success enacting the Milwaukee legislation. According to the column, the event marked the third week of the Milwaukee program.

The column states Williams "won enactment of her school choice program in the face of bitter opposition from the educational establishment, scorn from liberal white Democratic lawmakers, deep hostility from the local news media, and benign neglect from her national party." The column singles out the NAACP, "liberal congressional Democrats" like Sen. Kennedy, and Ron Brown. The column also says "some support is now being heard from [the D.L.C.] whose . . . magazine features a piece on Polly Williams' plan."¹

The 1992 Response

During the 1992 campaign, Clinton took the position that he supported public school choice, but opposed private school vouchers/tax credits. Talking points were developed (and apparently used -- at least they are reflected in an October, 1992 USA Today article) with respect to the Williams letter, although it does not appear that anything written was ever distributed to the press on this topic.

The 1992 response was that Clinton's letter did not indicate his support for private school vouchers, that he never supported vouchers because they drain funds from public schools. Rather, Clinton has supported creative thinking about and innovative approaches to education reform -- and did so in the letter. It was also stressed that under Clinton's leadership, Arkansas was among the first states to allow parents to choose among public schools. Bottom line: Clinton's letter did not endorse the idea of private school vouchers, but was only encouraging the search for innovation, something that he has consistently advocated.

Additional analysis

The letter says that Clinton is "fascinated" by the proposal and is having his staff "analyze it." That is a far cry from endorsing the policy, much less advocating that it be adopted in Arkansas or nationally. Clinton's clear empathy for Williams' struggle to find local solutions to educational problems does not amount to support for her solution.

¹In my research I also found an Elaine Kamarck opinion piece from New York Newsday, dated April 30, 1990, in which Williams' efforts are lauded.

If congressional voucher advocates press the issue, the President should stand firm on the position he clearly adopted in 1992. As Clarence Page pointed out in a March 14, 1996 column, "Clinton has good reason to be skeptical about vouchers. So do the rest of us." Page notes that, five years after the Milwaukee program was established, the results have been decidedly mixed. Contrasted with anecdotes of individual success stories, two of the 17 Milwaukee schools have failed, and two more are on the "critical list" with severe financial problems. Moreover, as of February, almost 200 out of 1,476 students participating this school year had dropped out of the program since September. Vouchers, Page says "are less a panacea than a last resort. They offer a triage approach, like combat medics who must perform the grim task of deciding who can be saved and who cannot. Vouchers cream off the most fortunate of the least fortunate, the students who have the brightest minds and the most conscientious parents, and leave behind the rest to fend for themselves." The President supports comprehensive education reform to benefit all students, not just a chosen few.

Attachments:

Letter to Polly Williams
Lambro column

03-15-1996 08:49
AUG 12 '92 16144

501 399 7196
FROM

CLINTON TRANS.

P. 02/08



STATE OF ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State Capitol
Little Rock 72201

Bill Clinton
Governor

OCT 8 1996

October 18, 1996

Representative Polly Williams
State Capitol
Room 10 East
P. O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Polly:

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Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton

cc:sta:12

16TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Washington Times

September 27, 1990, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: Part G; COMMENTARY; Pg. G4

LENGTH: 901 words

HEADLINE: Political shifts on education's battlefield

BYLINE: Donald Lambro; THE WASHINGTON TIMES

BODY:

When Wisconsin state Rep. Polly Williams arrived here last week to celebrate her long but victorious struggle to enact a school choice program for her poor Milwaukee constituents, this town's leading conservatives turned out to greet her as a conquering hero.

It was a scene that would have been politically unimaginable not too many years ago.

Yet as this fiery and highly articulate black Democratic lawmaker, who served as the Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1988 state campaign chairwoman, looked out over the Capitol Hill crowd that cheered her, she must have been struck by the irony of this overwhelmingly right-wing audience warmly embracing her cause.

Despite her dramatic legislative feat which allows children in her poor inner-city district to have the option of attending local private schools, no liberal Democratic leaders were present at the gathering to proclaim their support for her remarkable achievement.

She wasn't surprised. Indeed, she won enactment of her school choice program in the face of bitter opposition from the educational establishment, scorn from liberal white Democratic lawmakers, deep hostility from the local news media and benign neglect from her national party.

The NAACP certainly wasn't there. Her local NAACP chapter teamed up with the teachers unions to try to kill her program. Liberal congressional Democrats like Massachusetts Sen. Edward Kennedy, who profess such compassion for poor minorities, have similarly ignored her efforts. Nor has Democratic National Chairman Ron Brown shown any interest in highlighting her proposal as a model for other inner cities.

The reason: By giving the parents of 1,000 academically eligible black children the choice of entering local private schools to improve their education, her program will inject competition into America's deteriorating public school system. The teacher unions want none of that and the politicians who tow their line aren't going to touch it with a 10-foot pole either.

The Washington Times, September 27, 1990

But along the way her little program - which is now being considered by 14 state legislatures - has won the enthusiastic support of the politically conservative school-choice crowd. And it was this gang that showed up at last week's gala reception, sponsored by the Heritage Foundation and the Landmark Legal Foundation for Civil Rights, to sing her praises and applaud her program as the best way to lift inner-city minorities out of poverty. Vice President Dan Quayle served as honorary chairman of the event.

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GRAPHIC: Photo, Polly Williams

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Diary -

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**CHECK THEIR RECORDS ON SCHOOL CHOICE:
PRESIDENT CLINTON HAS BEEN A LEADER IN PROMOTING
COMPETITION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PARENTAL CHOICE**

"I challenge every state to give all parents the right to choose which public school their children will attend teachers form new schools with a charter they can keep only if they do a good job." - President Bill Clinton Union Address, January 23, 1996

I. AS GOVERNOR, BILL CLINTON PROPOSED AND WON PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE. Governor Bill Clinton proposed and signed the law in 1989 allowing parents to choose any public school in any school district -- making Arkansas among the first states to have such a law.

II. AS PRESIDENT, BILL CLINTON HAS REPEATEDLY ACTED TO PROMOTE CHARTER SCHOOLS AND CHOICE -- BOB DOLE REPEATEDLY OPPOSED HIM:

1. PRESIDENT CLINTON WON PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION TO HELP ESTABLISH CHARTER SCHOOLS TO EXPAND PARENTAL CHOICE AND COMPETITION. As part of his 1993 proposal to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, President Clinton proposed providing start-up funds for teachers, parents, and others to start charter schools -- innovative public schools governed by teachers, parents and others that operate free of many district and state regulations but are held accountable for results through performance-based contracts. In 1995, President Clinton announced grants to provide start-up funds for Charter Schools in 11 states, including Minnesota, Michigan, California, Texas, and Massachusetts.

BOB DOLE VOTED NO: Bob Dole voted against the Improving America's Schools Act that created the Charter School program. [Congressional Record 10/5/94, Senate Vote 321]

2. PRESIDENT CLINTON MADE CHARTER SCHOOLS A CLEAR OPTION FOR SCHOOLS THAT DON'T PERFORM. The President reformed the Title I education program -- which provides funds to improve the basic skills of children from disadvantaged schools. The President's proposal specifically listed "the creation of a charter schools" as an option for local communities.

BOB DOLE VOTED NO: Bob Dole voted against the Improving America's Schools Act that reformed Title 1, which helps improve reading and math skills. [CR 10/5/94, Senate Vote 321]

3. PRESIDENT CLINTON FOUGHT FOR AND SIGNED GOALS 2000 TO RAISE ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHOICE. 48 states -- including all but two Republican governors -- are using Goals 2000 to raise achievement and choice. Goals 2000 funds can be used to support the development of

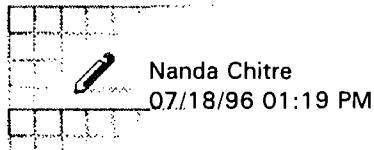
charter schools, and at least three states are already doing so: Minnesota, Michigan, and Massachusetts. In Michigan, 8 charter schools were funded in 1995 with Goals 2000 funds.

BOB DOLE VOTED NO: Even as the Senate voted in a bipartisan manner to pass it (63-22), Bob Dole voted against Goals 2000: Educate America's Act. [HR 1804, 3/26/94] "It was a bad idea when I voted against it in the Senate, and it's still a worse idea now." [New York Times, 7/5/95]

4. PRESIDENT CLINTON'S BALANCED BUDGET MORE THAN DOUBLES FUNDING FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS to \$40 million in 1997, and increases funding over the next 5 years to fund start-up costs for up to 3,000 new charter schools. [OMB, FY97 Budget, 3/96]

BOB DOLE RESIGNED AND REPUBLICANS VOTED NO: The House-passed FY97 Labor-HHS appropriations bill provides less than half the funding requested for charter schools.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



To: Actives
cc:
Subject: Press Release 7-18

PRESS RELEASE

***For Immediate Release:
July 18, 1996***

***Contact: Ann Lewis
Deputy Campaign Manager
202/496-5027
Joe Lockhart
National Press Secretary
202/496-5063***

STATEMENT BY JOE LOCKHART NATIONAL PRESS SECRETARY

Bashing America's teachers and slashing funding for public education is not an education plan for our future. Last year, Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich passed the most anti-education budget in American history cutting \$31 billion in funding for public education. Today, Bob Dole said he wants to take another \$15 billion from public education. Bob Dole is using teacher bashing as a smokescreen in another attempt to siphon funds from public education.

What a contrast today's proposal presents.

President Clinton is working to improve public education by working with parents, teachers and local communities, providing more choice and improving standards, facilities and safety in our schools.

Bob Dole wants to tear down public education by pitting teachers against parents and dramatically reducing our investment in public schools.

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PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

 Nanda Chitre
07/17/96 08:00 PM

To: Actives
cc:
Subject: Revised Press Release 7-17 on Dole and Education

PRESS RELEASE

***For Immediate Release:
July 17, 1996***

***Contact: Joe Lockhart
National Press Secretary
202/496-5063***

STATEMENT BY JOE LOCKHART NATIONAL PRESS SECRETARY

When it comes to improving education in America, Bob Dole needs to go back to school. Citizen Bob Dole conveniently forgets the record of Senator Bob Dole. In 1995, Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich passed the most anti-education budget in history cutting \$31 billion in education and training funding.

Bob Dole talks about making schools safer but voted against President Clinton's Safe and Drug Free School program.

Bob Dole talks about improving standards in schools but voted against President Clinton's Goals 2000 effort now being used in 48 states.

Bob Dole talks about expanding opportunity in higher education but voted to cut student loans, Pell Grants and work study.

President Clinton is leading the fight to improve educational standards in America. Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich are fighting the President every step of the way.

Bob Dole's commitment to education was tested early in his congressional career when he voted against creating the student loan program and Head Start. Dole was tested again last year and his answer was to support the worst education budget in our history. On the issue of education, Bob Dole has failed for thirty-five years.

President Clinton Enacted Historic New Initiatives:

PRESIDENT CLINTON FOUGHT FOR AND SIGNED A STRENGTHENING OF SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS. On October 20, 1994, President Clinton reformed and reauthorized the Drug Free Schools Act, to create the Safe and Drug Free Schools program which provides funding for enhanced school security, drug prevention programs and training teachers to deal with violence. Through the 1995 budget negotiations, Bill Clinton fought to keep Republicans from cutting Safe and Drug Free Schools.

BOB DOLE VOTED NO. The Dole-Gingrich budget would have cut the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program by more than ½ in 1996, from \$466 million to \$200 million and Bob Dole voted for a 51% cut in the FY95 Rescission Bill that President Clinton vetoed in June 1995. [House-passed FY96 Labor/HHS Approps. Bill. Dole voted for a 51% cut in FY95 Rescission Bill, President Clinton vetoed, June 1995.]

PRESIDENT CLINTON FOUGHT FOR AND SIGNED GOALS 2000 HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS. In 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000 Act which supports the development of standards of excellence for students and encourages grassroots reforms to improve our schools. 48 states and thousands of schools now participate in Goals 2000 and have developed their own strategic plans for educational improvement based on raising academic standards, improving teaching, increasing parental involvement and expanding the use of technology in the classroom. Goals 2000 has received bipartisan praise, including from Republican Governors and Fortune 500 CEOs.

BOB DOLE VOTED NO. Even as the Senate voted bipartisanly to pass Goals 2000 (63-22), Bob Dole voted no against the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, HR 1804, C.R., March 26, 1994, Vote #86. "It was a bad idea when I voted July 17, 1996 against it in the Senate, and it's still a worse idea NOW." [New York Times, 7/5/95]

PRESIDENT CLINTON FOUGHT FOR MAJOR EDUCATION INCREASES IN HIS BALANCED BUDGET -- OVER \$30 BILLION OVER 7 YEARS. [President Clinton's FY Balanced Budget, OMB, 3/96, chart 8-2]

BOB DOLE VOTED NO. The Dole-Gingrich budget called for \$31 billion in Education and Training Cuts. [FY 96 Budget Resolution, conference agreement, H.Con.Res 67]

PRESIDENT CLINTON FOUGHT TO CREATE NATIONAL SERVICE: President Clinton created the AmeriCorps program in September 1993 -- to enable young people to earn money for college by serving their communities and their country. In the past two years, 45,000 volunteers have worked in schools, hospitals, neighborhoods and parks.

BOB DOLE VOTED NO: 1993: Dole Voted Against Creating The

National Service Program. In 1993, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole led a GOP filibuster of President Clinton's National Service Program calling it a "willy-nilly mortgaging our future." [CQ Almanac, 1993 (p. 403; p. 30-S, Vote # 231); Keene, NH Speech, 2/18/95; New York Times, 7/27/93]

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S BALANCED BUDGET WOULD INCREASE HEAD START OPPORTUNITIES FOR POOR CHILDREN. President Clinton has already increased Head Start funding 29% from 1993 to 1996. President Clinton's FY1997 budget includes a new commitment to fund 1 million Head Start opportunities for preschool children by 2002 -- a \$1.2 billion increase in 1997 over 1993 levels.

BOB DOLE VOTED NO: Bob Dole voted against the creation of Head Start in 1964 and fought for the Dole-Gingrich budget which would have denied 150,000-180,000 children comprehensive Head Start education, health, and social services in the year 2002. [The Senate Budget Resolution -- which Dole voted for -- assumed a freeze in Head Start funding at 1995 levels, denying 150,000 opportunities in 2002. The House-passed Labor/HHS Bill cut Head Start to a funding level that would deny 180,000 children Head Start opportunities in 2002. Source: Department of Health and Human Services, October 25, 1995]

PRESIDENT CLINTON FOUGHT FOR AND SIGNED THE IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT -- WHICH INCLUDED FUNDS FOR NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS TO INCREASE PARENTAL CHOICE AND COMPETITION. On October 24, 1994, President Clinton signed legislation improving the Title I program as part of the Improving America's Schools Act. Title 1 provides funding at the local level to improve the skills of children in high-poverty schools, typically providing supplemental instruction in reading and math. This law provided start-up funds to support the development of charter schools, in at least 9 states, including Minnesota which received \$1.5 million [September 28, 1995, *St. Paul Pioneer Press and News Tribune*]

BOB DOLE VOTED NO: Bob Dole voted against the 1995 Improving America's Schools Act. [C.R. 10/5/94, Senate Vote #321]

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

**Senator Needs An Education on Education:
Dole Cannot Even Get His Own Facts Straight:**

False Claim: Bob Dole stated SAT scores were down.

SAT Scores Are Up -- Not Down: In 1995, American students achieved the highest average score in more than two decades, even though the number and diversity of students who are taking the SAT has multiplied dramatically in recent years. The national average for the class of 1995 was 910 -- up 14 points since 1991. [Source: College Entrance Examination Board (1995), College-Bound Seniors; 1995 Profile of SAT Program Test Takers.]

False Claim: Bob Dole stated the dropout rate is up.

The Drop Out Rate is Down -- Not Up: The dropout rate is down from 14.6% to 10.5% from 1972 to 1994 -- a decline of nearly 40%. The dropout rate is defined as the percent of 16-24 year-olds who have not completed high school and were not enrolled in school in those years. [Source: National Center for Education Statistics (1994), NAEP 1992 Trends in Academic Progress; John Bishop (1996), "The Impact of Curriculum-Based External Examinations on School Priorities and Student Learning," International Journal of Educational Research (in press),]

False Claim: Bob Dole said the Education bureaucracy keeps getting bigger and bigger.

The Education Department Under President Clinton is Doing More with Less.

Education Department Is Doing More With Less. Even as K-12 enrollment has risen by almost 5 million students since 1992, the Department has done more with less. It is providing better services to more Americans with less staff, fewer rules, and at reduced cost.

Student Enrollment Up While Education Staff is Down. Almost 30% fewer staff than under the old Department of Health, Education and Welfare -- and about 500 fewer employees since 1993.

Only 2% of the Education Department Budget Spent on Federal Administration. Only 2% of the Department's discretionary funding is spent on administrative cost at the national level, paying for accountability, federal oversight and sharing best practices and proven ideas.

Cut Regulations Nearly In Half And Eliminated Outdated Programs. Since 1993, the Department has cut all regulations nearly in half and has eliminated dozens of outdated programs.

Cut the Cost of Student Loan Defaults by More Than Half. In just three years, the student loan net default costs have been cut from almost \$2 billion per year in fiscal 1992 to just \$500 million per year in fiscal 1995, while the volume of college student loans increased by 50%.

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT

October 1, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRUCE REED
GENE SPERLING
LESLIE T. THORNTON

SUBJECT: VOUCHERS/SCHOOL CHOICE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As you know, the crux of Senator Dole's education plan is federally-funded private and religious school vouchers. This memorandum outlines the following issues that might be useful in your preparation for the debates on this matter: (1) a review of your position on vouchers/school choice; (2) Dole's education plan/position on vouchers; (3) Dole attacks on your position on vouchers, including a discussion of the Polly Williams letter and your choice to send Chelsea to private school; (4) public opinion about voucher/school choice; and (5) recent thinking by experts on vouchers/school choice including a discussion of a recent Harvard study supporting vouchers.

I. YOUR POSITION ON VOUCHERS/SCHOOL CHOICE

The difference between your position on vouchers and school choice might be summarized as the difference between a comprehensive plan to improve public education and help all students versus a plan that can by its own terms only help a few chosen students. In 1989, as Governor, you proposed and signed into law a bill allowing parents to choose any public school in any school district – making Arkansas among the first states to have such a law. As President, you won passage of legislation – the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – to help establish charter schools to expand parental choice and competition. In 1995, you announced grants to provide start-up funds for charter schools in 11 states including Minnesota, Michigan, California, Texas, and Massachusetts. You reformed the Title I education program (funding to improve the basic skills of children from disadvantaged schools) to specifically list as an option for local communities “the creation of charter schools.” Your 1997 budget doubles funding for charter schools to \$40 million and increases funding over the next five years to fund start-up costs for up to 3,000 new charter schools. [OMB, FY97 Budget, 3/96]. In your recent Fresno speech, you said about charter schools:

“I believe we should let a thousand flowers bloom – whatever it takes to bring the families, the parent, the community leaders in to support the teachers and the principals and the educators, so that together we can have the kind of village that it takes to make sure our children have excellence in education.” [Morris E. Dailey Elementary School, Fresno, California, September 12, 1996]

You have opposed federal government support of public vouchers for private schools because they take much needed funds away from public schools.

II. PUBLIC OPINION ON SCHOOL CHOICE ISSUES

The public support ^(S) your position on public school choice and vouchers. That is, there is strong public support for *public* school choice but the public is opposed to providing public funds for private education. Nationally, 69% of the public favors letting parents choose the public school their child attends, while 28% are opposed. [Gallup/Phi Delta Kappan, 1995] A strong majority of the public remains opposed to "allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense" (61% to 36% in 1996), but support has increased since 1993 when only 24% favored the idea. [Gallup/Phi Delta Kappan, 1996]. Also in 1996, the Gallup/Phi Delta Kappan poll found that a sizable majority (60%) of private school parents are in favor of private school choice at public expense – the first time the annual Gallup poll has shown a majority of any demographic group in favor of this idea.

Opinion on vouchers is mixed, but Americans are strongly opposed to replacing the current public school systems with a spot s system of private schools funded by vouchers. Over two-thirds of American oppose the idea of replacing the public schools with " a system of private and church-related schools with parents selecting from among these non-public schools, using vouchers paid for by the government." Parents of private school children also rejected this idea (57% opposed compared to 37% in favor) [Gallup/Phi Delta Kappan, 1996]. And, parents' preferences for public versus private schools vary across polls and appear to depend on the wording of the survey question.

You might note, however, that a recently released survey by the *Washington Post*, Harvard University and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation designed to measure what voters know about the presidential candidates reveals that many voters have your position reversed with Dole's on vouchers. That is, about four in 10 voters incorrectly believe you are the candidate who prefers government vouchers that would help parents send their children to private or parochial schools. [The *Washington Post*, September 29, 1996, A 12].

III. SENATOR DOLE'S EDUCATION PLAN

In a recent stump speech [September 9, St. Petersburg, Fla], Senator Dole pledged to make education "the centerpiece of keystone" of his administration, while also promising to abolish the Department of Education. He says public schools have been taken over by an education monopoly that fails to give our children the skills they need to compete in our global economy [Dole/Kemp '96, Online Campaign, *Where Bob Dole Stands in K-12 Education*]. He specifically criticizes you for being on the side of the teacher's unions and bureaucrats.

The thrust of Senator Dole's education agenda is his "Opportunity Scholarship." He says they are patterned after the Pell Grants and the original GI Bill, and that through a cooperative federal, state and local effort to give 4 million low and middle-income families the ability to select the best school for their children. His plan would give a minimum of \$1,000 per child in K-8 schools (\$500 federal/\$500 state), and \$1,500 per child in high school (\$750 federal/\$750 state). The maximum family income for eligible children would be determined by the participating state.

Dole's Education Plan: Opportunity Scholarships
(From Dole/Kemp backgrounder on School Choice)

A federal, state and local effort to give four million low- and middle-income families the ability to select the best schools for their children.

Funded annually with \$2.5 billion in federal funds.

Four-year competitive grants will be awarded to children from low- and middle-income families in up to 15 states.

Families can use these scholarships to send their children to any lawfully operated school -- public, private or religious -- that chooses to participate. Scholarship funds will be used to pay tuition, school fees and other reasonable expenses.

This program will help fund scholarships for more than 4 million children -- nearly 10 percent of all children in elementary and secondary schools.

IV. DOLE ATTACKS ON YOUR POSITION ON VOUCHERS

The mainstay of both Senator Dole's education agenda and his attacks on your education initiatives is vouchers. He made his most personal attack on your position on vouchers in his GOP convention acceptance speech when he said "[t]here is no reason why those who live on any street in America should not have the same right as the person who lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue -- the right to send your child to the school of your choice. [Acceptance Speech, 8/15/96]. He also charges that the reason you are against vouchers is because the NEA opposes them.¹ Aside from outlining his own Opportunity Scholarship plan, however, he has not been specific either about his real differences with you on education policy or how he will pay for his Opportunity Scholarship without cutting. ? He does, however, point to a May 1996 Gallup poll which showed nearly half of parents with children in public schools think government should provide funds for students to attend private schools. He also references the recent Harvard University study of schools participating in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin school choice program which shows that students in the program scored 12 percent higher in math skills and 5 percent higher in

¹ As you know, Senator Dole has unleashed a barrage of attacks against the NEA, your relationship with the NEA, and teachers generally. After an unfavorable response to his attack on teachers, Dole has attempted to distinguish between teachers and teacher's unions but he continues to charge that you "can't reform the nation's educational system because it is controlled by National Education Association and they will not let him do anything." [Santa Barbara, 8/27/96]

reading skills than similar children attending the city's public schools (NBC *Nightly News* reported on this study on September 3, 1996).²

A. The Polly Williams Letter

Senator Dole charges you with flip-flopping on the issue of school vouchers, arguing that you supported Polly Williams' voucher plan in Milwaukee. You may remember that on October 15, 1990, you wrote Representative Polly Williams, the author of Wisconsin's original voucher legislation a letter (attached) on the program. You wrote "I read Don Lambro's recent column about your version of the school choice bill in Milwaukee. I am fascinated by that proposal and am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by the status quo. Keep up the good work."

You appear to have been responding to Donald Lambro's September 27, 1990 column "Political Shifts on Education's Battlefield." The column states Williams "won enactment of her school choice program in the face of bitter opposition from the education establishment, scorn from liberal white Democratic lawmakers, deep hostility from the local new media, and benign neglect from her national party." The column singles out the NAACP, "liberal congressional Democrats" like Sen. Kennedy, and Ron Brown. The column also says "some support is now being heard from [the DLC] whose . . . magazine features a piece on Polly Williams' plan." There is also an opinion piece written by Elaine Kamarck in *New York Newsday*, April 30, 1990, in which Williams' efforts are lauded.

Your letter was raised in the 1992 campaign. Another article (possibly September 27, 1990, *Washington Times*, quoted Williams saying "I was surprised that he was taking

²We don't believe Senator Dole has made this charge yet, but critics of your position on vouchers, including Bill Bennett, argue that federally-funded vouchers for private elementary and secondary schools are no different from the GI Bill or federally-funded Pell Grants that are not restricted to public colleges and universities. Secretary Riley answers this question in three parts: (1) state governments bear a constitutional responsibility to provide a free public education at the elementary and secondary level. The federal government does not have that responsibility; we should not federalize public education; (2) there is a traditional role that we expect our local public elementary and secondary schools to play, bringing together Americans from different walks of life and instilling common democratic values – postsecondary education focuses more on education for career and employment; (3) private voucher schools can suddenly fail – go bankrupt and close – it is one thing for this to happen to a college-aged student but it's another when as happened in Milwaukee, it's February, you're a second-grader, and you've got nowhere to go because your voucher school has gone belly-up and shut its doors.

that stand [against private school vouchers] because that was not the stand that he took with me in his letter. I was disappointed. He definitely gave me the feeling in his letter that he strongly supported me. And he didn't indicate otherwise in subsequent meetings we had." The campaign's response in 1992 was that you did not indicate support for private school vouchers and that you have never supported vouchers because they drain funds from public schools. Rather, you have supported creative thinking and innovative approaches to education reform and said so in the letter. The campaign also reminded voters that under your leadership, Arkansas was among one of the first states to allow parents to choose among public schools.

Williams, who is a Democrat, and others have used the letter and Chelsea's attendance at a private school to argue your inconsistency on the issue. A 1994 Heritage Foundation paper described Williams as "the black Milwaukee welfare mother turned state legislator who championed the country's only court-sanctioned-voucher program."

B. Chelsea and Sidwell Friends

Again, Senator Dole's most personal attacks on your position on vouchers is that you oppose even the smallest demonstration project that may help lower-income and middle-income children while you had the choice to and did send your own daughter to a private school. The suggested response as outlined in your debate briefing book is as follows:

"I don't think Hillary and I are different from most parents. Chelsea is our pride and joy -- we want the best for her. But when Hillary and I began thinking about where she would go to school in Washington, we had to think about things like where the daughter of a President could go to school and feel safe, and not feel so out of place she couldn't concentrate on her studies. We chose Sidwell Friends because we believed it would be the most secure school for Chelsea and because of its diversity and commitment to service learning.

But, let me say this. The issue of vouchers for private and parochial schools is not about Chelsea. The issue is public education and where I have stood on it. I have opposed vouchers for private schools because they drain taxpayer dollars from public schools for the benefit of private schools and there would never be enough dollars to send every child to a private school even if every single federal dollar we now spend on education were directed to this. Almost 90% of all school students attend public schools. So, the real issue is how to give *all* American children the opportunity to go to the best schools possible."

Secretary Riley strongly believes you should find calm comfort with this response. He believes that it is persuasive and believable and that your record on public education stands for itself.

24TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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USA TODAY

October 8, 1992, Thursday, FINAL EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 11A

LENGTH: 1094 words

HEADLINE: How the 'slick' label stacks up // A look at Clinton's history

BYLINE: Bill Nichols

DATELINE: LITTLE ROCK

BODY:

Republicans have cast Bill Clinton as a draft dodger, a tax- and-spender, even a pseudo-socialist.

But the tag that President Bush seems to have settled on in the campaign's final weeks is an old standby - ''Slick Willie,'' the eternal politician who can't be outpandered or pinned down by anybody.

Bush likes to say that if Clinton is elected, ''we'd have to replace the American eagle with a chameleon.''

A Bush TV ad shows Clinton debating Clinton.

Republicans, whose own nominee raised taxes in 1990 after vowing not to and shifted positions in recent weeks to shower key electoral states with appropriations, say there are dozens of Clinton straddles.

Vice President Quayle even listed what he calls Clinton's ''top 10 flip-flops.''

Is Clinton as slick as Republicans contend? A closer look, starting with each accusation:

- The pledge: Clinton promised, in 1990, that if he were re-elected governor he wouldn't run for any other office and would serve his full four- year term. Then last October, he announced for president.

The facts are undeniable. But Clinton says that in a tour last fall, he talked with Arkansans about his plans and they released him from his pledge.

Polls show Clinton must have missed about 40% of the state; that number says he should have kept his pledge. Some Clinton meetings were prearranged with supporters.

- Tax cuts: Clinton pushed a middle-class tax cut during the primaries, then modified his position in June as he began emphasizing deficit reduction.

USA TODAY, October 8, 1992

Clinton's economic plan now offers a choice between a middle-class tax cut and a tax credit for children.

In New Hampshire, on Jan. 19, he said: 'I want to make it very clear that this middle-class tax cut, in my view, is central to any attempt we're going to make to have a short-term economic strategy.'

But on June 6 on ABC's Good Morning America, he said: 'I would emphasize to you that the press and my opponents always made more of the middle-class tax cut than I did.'

- School choice: Clinton supported public and private school choice in the past but is accused of backing off, pressured by teachers' unions.

Clinton has been one of the national innovators in U.S. education.

The Arkansas Legislature, in 1989, passed a bill allowing parents some choice in where their children could attend public schools.

His position on private school choice is a bit messier. Clinton now clearly opposes using public money or tax credits to subsidize private schools.

But in 1990, he wrote Wisconsin state Rep. Polly Williams to say he was 'fascinated' by a proposal for private school choice.

Clinton aides say he never endorsed the idea and was only encouraging the search for innovations.

- Term limits: Clinton said on NBC's Meet the Press in January that term limits on elected officials were 'a decision that people ought to make.' Then this summer, he said he opposed the idea.

Here one must listen closely.

Clinton always has opposed term limits, spokeswoman Max Parker says. But he believes voters should have the right to decide it for themselves.

- Health care: Clinton says he won't raise taxes to pay for his health care plan, but then said in a USA TODAY interview that 'there will be a buy-in tax, which they can call a payroll tax.'

What Clinton said in that August interview was that cost-controls and insurance reform should lower health care costs to the point that firms that don't now offer health care benefits would be able to afford them rather than pay the government to do it for them.

But if that doesn't work, 'there will be a buy-in tax, which they can call a payroll tax or whatever, down the road for those that don't provide health insurance in any other way.'

But in a recent speech, Clinton repeated that he'd pay for his program without a tax increase; cost controls and tax credits would let firms provide universal coverage without a government provider.

- Welfare: Clinton said he would not sign, as president, a waiver allowing

USA TODAY, October 8, 1992

New Jersey to implement a law preventing welfare increases for every additional child a recipient has.

Then Clinton said he'd sign the waiver.

Again, one must listen closely. Clinton says he still opposes the change in New Jersey, but as president, he would feel obligated to allow a state to control its own destiny. So he would sign the waiver.

- Abortion: Clinton has been accused of playing both sides, telling Arkansas abortion opponents that he opposed federal financing for abortions, then switching his position when he ran for president.

Like Bush, who supported abortion rights until he sought the GOP presidential nomination in 1980, Clinton's position on abortion has evolved.

Clinton signed a 1989 parental notification law, but in 1988, opposed a referendum to outlaw public funding of abortion, but only on the grounds that state money for abortions is minimal anyway.

Clinton now says he's always supported Roe vs. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that prevented states from outlawing abortions. But his positions still raise questions.

On the issue of a 24-hour waiting period for abortions, Clinton says he supports a voluntary waiting period but opposes a mandatory one. Not too many states are pushing voluntary waiting periods.

- Supreme Court: Clinton has consistently said he would nominate only justices who support Roe vs. Wade but also said he's uncomfortable with any litmus test. The difference in the two statements can be hard to draw.

- Gulf war: Clinton says he supported the war but also "agreed with the arguments" of senators who favored giving sanctions more time.

Clinton says that statement was taken out of context, that he was just trying to show support for lawmakers from his state and elsewhere who voted against going to war.

- Vietnam: Clinton has told several different stories about his draft status in the '60s.

Clinton now admits not wrongdoing, but a failing memory on what he did or didn't do to avoid serving in Vietnam: when he received an induction notice; when he notified the Arkansas ROTC that he wouldn't be using its deferment; or if he met with state draft officials.

Clinton on tax cuts

"I want to make it very clear that this middle-class tax cut ... is central to any attempt we're going to make to have a short-term economic strategy."

- Bill Clinton on Jan. 19 in New Hampshire

"I would emphasize to you that the press and my opponents always made more of the middle-class tax cut than I did."

USA TODAY, October 8, 1992

- Clinton on June 6 on ABC's Good Morning America

GRAPHIC: EAR PHOTO; color, GNS; PHOTO; b/w, Blake Sell, Reuters; PHOTO; b/w, Steve Jaffe

CUTLINE: CLINTON CUTLINE: THE DRAFT ISSUE: Bill Clinton and running mate Al Gore with talk show host Phil Donahue, who on Tuesday irritated Clinton by bringing up questions on the candidate's draft history. CUTLINE: ON ABORTION: Bill Clinton at a June rally in Washington, D.C. He has said he would require Supreme Court nominees to support abortion rights but has said he wouldn't require a 'litmus test.'

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

1ST STORY of Focus printed in FULL format.

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The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

January 13, 1993

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Section A; Page 15

LENGTH: 633 words

HEADLINE: Bill Clinton's idea of 'school choice' applies only to affluent Americans

BYLINE: Donald Lambro

BODY:

WASHINGTON - The national news media's treatment of the Clintons' decision to put their daughter in a private school went to extraordinary lengths to avoid addressing the real issue in this story.

The issue was not whether the Clinton's were right or wrong in choosing an upper-crust private school over a public school. They made the correct decision for their daughter's welfare. Nor does the issue have anything to do with the racial makeup of the school they chose. The fact that it contains minorities as well as whites and, through scholarships, a number of needy kids as well, is irrelevant to the subject.

The issue is Clinton's disingenuousness and blatant double standard on the core educational issue of the 1992 campaign: school choice.

George Bush supports state and federal school choice programs that include both public and private schools. Clinton wants choice programs restricted to public schools only. While this was not a major issue in the campaign, it was one of the major litmus tests that the teachers unions applied to Clinton before giving him their endorsement. In an appearance before the NEA last summer, he made it clear that he was opposed to school choice programs that sought to support private schools as part of a parent's option.

School choice cuts across political, racial and income lines as parents seek alternatives to poorly run public schools. Perhaps the pre- eminent school choice program is in Milwaukee, where 1,000 poor kids are each given up to \$ 2,500 in public school funds to attend private schools.

Thus, when the Clintons made their decision to send their daughter to the \$ 10,700 a year Sidwell Friends school, they sent clear message that said: We have the means to choose the best school available for our kid and we choose a private school because she's going to get a better education there. But we don't want government programs that seek to offer less affluent families the same choice.

However, this was not the first demonstration of Clinton's double standard on this issue. About a year before he became a candidate for president, he went out of his way to praise the chief architect of the Milwaukee's school choice

program, Wisconsin state Rep. Polly Williams. After reading a column I had written about how the unions, the NAACP, the Democratic Party and the local media had ganged up against Williams's school choice efforts, Clinton wrote the Democratic lawmaker a letter on Oct. 18, 1990, that said in part:

"I read Don Lambro's recent column about your version of the school choice bill in Milwaukee. I am fascinated by that proposal and am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement."

Yet when Clinton went before the powerful teachers lobby to receive their benediction one year later, he turned his back on her public/private school choice program, which is poison to the NEA.

When I reached Polly Williams at her office this week, she went to great lengths to praise Clinton for "making a parental decision and not a political decision." But "all parents should have the same option of being able to send their kids to the best school possible," this former welfare mother told me.

Clinton "showed us that there must be something wrong with the public schools in Washington because he chose not to send his daughter to them," she continued. "In all of the public schools in Washington, none was good enough for Chelsea.

"Now let us do for the parents that don't have \$ 10,000 a year, let's make it possible for parents to send their kids to private schools," Williams said.

How about it Bill?-(c1993.)

Donald Lambro is syndicated by the United Feature Syndicate. His column appears in The Journal occasionally.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: January 23, 1993

41ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Newsday

April 30, 1990, Monday, NASSAU AND SUFFOLK EDITION

SECTION: VIEWPOINTS; Pg. 47
Other Edition: City Pg. 43

LENGTH: 933 words

HEADLINE: Poor People Hoping for Help, Try Looking to Your Right

BYLINE: By Elaine Ciulla Kamarck. Elaine Ciulla Kamarck is a senior fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute and a regular contributor to these pages.

BODY:

IF YOU GO far enough to the left in American politics, you may bump into the right, and there you will find that America is on the verge of a new war on poverty. Leading it are people who never even knew each other, let alone talked to one another.

The most recent example can be found in the person of Wisconsin State Rep. Annette Polly Williams. Williams is black and has been poor for most of her life. She still lives in the inner-city Milwaukee neighborhood where she raised four children, spent some time on welfare and finally, 20 years after graduating from high school, got her college degree.

A few weeks ago, Williams took on the entire liberal establishment of Wisconsin and beat them by passing a bill that would give poor parents in Milwaukee tuition vouchers for their children that they could take to any city school - public or private (nonparochial). The plan, which would give each parent who qualified \$ 2,500, subtracts that amount from the public school system's budget. It was passed by a coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats.

Williams did not discover vouchers by reading tracts from conservative think tanks (which have supported the idea for some time). She simply looked around her and concluded that when black parents wanted education for their children, the power structure gave them integration. What this amounted to was "magnet" schools to attract white students into the city and ridiculously long bus rides to bring black children out of the city. In a rhyming sequence reminiscent of her friend the Rev. Jesse Jackson (Williams chaired his 1988 campaign in Wisconsin), Williams says that while blacks wanted to "educate," the white power structure wanted to "integrate and transportate." From frustration with busing and overcrowded schools, Williams says, "I came up with an idea, and it turned out that what I was talking about was a voucher concept . . . People with money were always able to buy into an area with good schools."

In Washington, D.C., the new war on poverty is being waged by Kimi Gray. Like Williams, Gray is a former welfare mother. She had the first of her five

Newsday, April 30, 1990

children at age 14 and has lived in public housing for much of her life. She is a leader in the movement to allow residents of public housing projects to buy their own apartments. To do this, she had to get a federal law changed and, in so doing, she hooked up with a conservative former congressman - Jack Kemp - now secretary of housing and urban development.

Like tuition vouchers, tenant ownership of public housing used to be a conservative idea. But in the hands of Kimi Gray and Polly Williams, ideas that were conservative become something else entirely. Kimi Gray taught Jack Kemp a thing or two about public housing; the bill that permits tenants to buy public housing has in it provisions that would renovate the properties before sale to the tenants and that would keep the properties for resale to moderate-income people. Thus, the conservative notion of privatization became a vehicle for empowerment. In the hands of Polly Williams, vouchers, which in the classic conservative version subsidized rich whites in private schools, were limited to families up to 175 percent of the poverty level, thus giving poor parents some of the choice that middle-class parents have. Says Gray, "Our theme is empowerment, empowerment of the people . . . "

Underlying that theme is the question, how well can poor people make choices for themselves? Polly Williams says, "Low-income black families know that the only way out is education . . . They [bureaucrats] honestly believe that poor families can't make decisions." For both Williams and Gray, the enemy is not necessarily the right or the left; it is the welfare bureaucracy - a group referred to by Williams as "the poverty industry pimps - the people in the middle." Both women complained that government money was going to the bureaucrats, not poor people.

Conservatives have been quick to celebrate and adapt to this new war on poverty. Stuart Butler, a scholar at the conservative Heritage Foundation, has outlined a poverty strategy in the National Review: Reach an accommodation on civil rights, adopt a strategy of empowerment, attack the poverty industry and allow states to be the innovators of antipoverty policy. Says Gray, "We are all registered Democrats . . . but we work very closely with Republicans because they're the ones that seem to understand that we do not want to stay a poor and permanent underclass." Williams has been to the White House and was praised by President George Bush in a speech.

In talking about his acclaimed approach to poverty in Peru, the author Hernando De Soto said: "There is no right or left; there is only up or down." Which is exactly as it should be. Social policy is a very inexact science. Some pieces of the original war on poverty were spectacular successes; others weren't. But the new war on poverty has to contend with a creation of the original war on poverty - an entrenched establishment of middle-class people whose livelihood depends on the continuation of certain programs regardless of their effectiveness. Polly Williams laughs at the idea that her voucher bill for 1,000 poor public school pupils is a threat to the public school system but it is, she admits, a warning. Her message to the public school system of Milwaukee is a message that all big city school systems should hear: "It's gonna make it better or it's gonna dismantle it . . . If you all are worried about your jobs, try doing them better."

GRAPHIC: Newsday illustration by Bob Newman-Woman and child walking to right, from one school to another, past a fence made of money.

2ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1996 The Columbus Dispatch
The Columbus Dispatch

March 14, 1996, Thursday

SECTION: EDITORIAL & COMMENT, Pg. 15A

LENGTH: 770 words

HEADLINE: RESULTS FROM MILWAUKEE LARGELY DISCREDIT SCHOOL VOUCHERS AS URBAN
PANACEA

BYLINE: Clarence Page

BODY:

President Clinton says he will veto a Republican-backed bill that would provide financial vouchers to District of Columbia parents who want to send their children to private schools. The decision, undoubtedly, will haunt him this election year. After all, his daughter is enrolled in Washington's prestigious Sidwell Friends Academy. But if the president is looking for reasons to be skeptical about the virtue of these vouchers, he need look no further than that great voucher laboratory, Milwaukee.

More than five years have passed since Milwaukee became the nation's first lab for vouchers under the strong urging of Wisconsin's Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson and state Rep. Annette "Polly" Williams, a Milwaukee Democrat. Williams, an outspoken black advocate for the poor, has become a national hero of the voucher movement.

Vouchers allow parents to send their children to private or nonsecular schools at state expense.

Free-market conservatives have made lavish promises in the name of school vouchers. Public schools actually would benefit, they said, from healthy competition. Public-school classes would get smaller. Needy students would get more attention. Everyone would learn more. No need for cumbersome bureaucracies or state regulations. Let the magic of the marketplace decide.

So, how are vouchers doing? Unfortunately, the marketplace produces disasters along with miracles. After five years, the results have been mixed.

Since January, two of the 17 private Milwaukee schools participating in the voucher program have gone out of business, leaving students stranded and parents scrambling to find another school. Two more have been put on the critical list with severe financial troubles.

The director of one school, Exito, which closed in January, was charged with writing \$ 47,000 in bad checks. A state audit in February found the two closed schools may have exaggerated enrollments enough to overbill Wisconsin as much as \$ 390,000. The audit also found that of the 1,476 students participating in the program this school year, almost 200 have dropped out since September.

The Columbus Dispatch, March 14, 1996

On the positive side of the ledger, there have been numerous encouraging, heartwarming anecdotes of individual success stories. When I visited voucher students in Milwaukee a few years ago, teachers at independent schools pointed with pride to students who were making A's and B's, after having been given up as lost causes by teachers and principals in public schools.

Despite such encouraging anecdotes, Milwaukee's vouchers have yet to meet the grand promises of advocates who claimed the unleashed competition between public and private schools would markedly improve overall student achievement and test scores.

Now, even staunch voucher advocates like Williams are calling for more state oversight. Among the proposals being discussed are measures that would allow the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to certify the skills of school managers and enable it to order closings, improvements, new management or state takeover of troubled private schools that are in the voucher program.

In other words, the more you use public money for private schools, the more state regulations and bureaucracy follow - and the more private schools begin to look like public schools. Tough break, but what good does it do to trade an academically substandard public school for a financially substandard private one?

Yet voucher advocates say the program is still - still! - too young to draw major conclusions from it.

It's time for a reality check. Everybody is looking for a simple, easy-to-grasp solution to the nation's public-school woes. Vouchers sound simple but involve more risk than meets the eye.

Vouchers tend to be earmarked only for those schools on which the middle-class public has given up, schools whose performance appears to have gone over the brink, seemingly producing little more than dropouts or graduates who can't read their own diplomas.

Vouchers, then, are less a panacea than a last resort. They offer a triage approach, like combat medics who must perform the grim task of deciding who can be saved and who cannot. Vouchers cream off the most fortunate of the least fortunate, the students who have the brightest minds and the most conscientious parents, and leave behind the rest to fend for themselves.

That's a way out for some students - a blessing for them. But don't call it a cure for the nation's educational woes. Clinton has good reason to be skeptical about vouchers. So do the rest of us.

Clarence Page writes for the Chicago Tribune.

LOAD-DATE: March 15, 1996

8TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Los Angeles Times

October 22, 1993, Friday, Home Edition

SECTION: Part A; Page 1; Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 1750 words

HEADLINE: COLUMN ONE;
A CHANCE TO SEE CHOICE AT WORK;
MILWAUKEE IS THE ONLY CITY THAT USES PUBLIC VOUCHERS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS.
SMALLER CLASSES AND TIGHTER DISCIPLINE PLEASE PARENTS AND STUDENTS, BUT THERE IS
NO PROOF THAT OVERALL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE HAS IMPROVED.

BYLINE: By ELIZABETH SHOGREN, TIMES STAFF WRITER

DATELINE: MILWAUKEE

BODY:

Urban Day School principal Robb Rauh speaks with passion about the rewards of letting inner-city parents use public funds to send their children to private schools such as his.

His Exhibit A is Regis Chesir, an eighth-grader who entered Urban Day as a "totally irresponsible" kid who never finished his homework. Now he has a solid B average and is the captain of the basketball team.

But as the program enters its fourth year, Rauh concedes there is no proof that it has improved academic performance overall -- and standardized test results at Urban Day are hardly glowing. "I haven't compared scores," he said, "because I'm afraid of what I might find out."

Such conflicting currents have helped to make "private school choice" -- using public funds to enroll students in private schools -- one of the most divisive education issues in recent years, especially since many parents feel public schools are too broken to fix.

Next month, Californians will vote on the broadest private school choice measure ever put on a ballot. The proposal would give parents a public voucher for about \$2,600 to enroll a student in any school in the state: public or private, religious or secular.

Advocates say the proposal would give public schools a wake-up call: Get better or lose enrollment -- and money. Critics warn that it would undermine public schools by siphoning off their most motivated students and depriving them of money and staff.

Milwaukee may be the best place to see how such a program might work, since it is the only city in the nation that offers vouchers for private schools. (Other public districts pay private schools to educate children who are disabled or have other special needs.)

Los Angeles Times, October 22, 1993

In particular, the plan may offer insight into how school choice would affect low-income families, the people most often trapped when public schools deteriorate.

That's because only low-income families may join the Milwaukee program. Students receive \$2,970 vouchers from the state -- the citywide average amount of state aid per pupil. These are given to the private school of their choice. The private schools may not charge additional tuition.

So far, the Milwaukee program scores well in parent satisfaction but gets an incomplete on performance.

At one level, experts suggest, Milwaukee's experience shows that California should not expect its proposed voucher program to suddenly improve the usual measure of scholastic achievement -- namely, standardized test scores.

John Witte, a University of Wisconsin professor appointed by the state to evaluate the program, found that reading scores of pupils who left for private schools actually fell short of scores of similar students who remained in the public schools.

"There's no indication that the private schools do better than public schools do," Witte said.

But Milwaukee parents who have used the program praise the private schools for providing safe environments for children to learn, more individualized attention from teachers and tighter discipline.

"The parents are very happy," said Polly Williams, the Democratic state legislator who spearheaded enactment of Milwaukee's program. "There is more parental involvement, and the children want to go to school."

Most of the participating schools already catered to low-income, inner-city families. Only existing private schools may participate -- this provision has avoided the formation of new schools with extremist agendas -- and no private school may let students paying with vouchers make up more than 49% of enrollment. Thirteen private schools are in the plan, and they may not use any testing or other application process to decide which students they will accept.

At several of the schools, vouchers have been a boon because \$2,970 exceeds annual tuition. The Bruce Guadalupe School, for example, was able to add a building with its extra money.

Urban Day, which enrolls 167 voucher pupils, has doubled its student body and opened a second campus in a vacant Catholic school building.

"I think it's wonderful what has happened to Urban Day School," said Rauh, the principal. "We're able to offer more to kids than we did four years ago because there's more money."

Gloria Collins enrolled her daughter, Natasha, in Urban Day four years ago because Natasha, then a third-grader, could not read or do simple arithmetic and had to be forced to go to school. Now, in the sixth grade, she is earning a

Los Angeles Times, October 22, 1993

steady C average.

More important to Collins, a dropout who got her high school equivalency degree and works as a teacher's assistant at Urban Day, Natasha is happy about going to school each morning. Collins says her daughter's positive attitude is all the proof she needs that choice is a success.

"In public schools if you don't have it, they won't work with you to get it," she said. "They let you ride along until you get fed up with riding and you drop out."

Every parent is expected to be involved in the school. Urban Day's motto this year is: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." Discipline is tough, but the atmosphere is warm.

Rauh took a 50% pay cut from his California teaching job to come to Urban Day as a teacher in 1990, the year the program was introduced. Having written a master's degree thesis on choice at Columbia University, he wanted to see it in practice.

In classroom after classroom in the impeccably clean, colorfully decorated school, students are well behaved and engaged in their work. The test results do not reflect it yet, but Rauh believes they soon will show the school is having a positive impact on students' academic abilities.

"The people who live in the immediate neighborhood did not have a lot of choice before," he said.

Rauh's view, however, is not universal. What Monica Helfenbein has seen at Urban Day does not make her a believer in using public dollars to send children to private schools.

Helfenbein has a unique perspective as a public schoolteacher whose kindergarten classroom is located at a private school because the children she teaches are enrolled in before- and after-school day care there. She has observed Urban Day's program from close up but as an outsider.

Urban Day and other private schools, she said, "don't have to have certified teachers, so you don't have consistency. There are shortages of materials and supplies. The quality is just not dependable."

In the first year of the program, one private school that enrolled 63 voucher students closed in the middle of the year over accusations of mismanagement, a lack of books and supplies and inadequate facilities.

The Milwaukee experience doesn't offer much guidance on the competing claims about choice's impact on public schools. Not enough pupils participate here: There is a citywide ceiling of 1% of public school enrollment, or about 950 students. The program "does not help or hurt Milwaukee public schools," said Witte, the state-appointed evaluator of the voucher program. "It has a very negligible impact."

But defenders of public schools find fault with what is going on in Milwaukee.

Los Angeles Times, October 22, 1993

"A key problem with the Milwaukee program -- and it's a major problem with the California program -- is that they took out any quality control from public authorities," said Gordon Ambach, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

For instance, Urban Day's library is tiny, and Harambee, a nearby private school where almost half of the 420 students are participating in the choice program, has no library at all.

Materials and supplies, however, are not what attract parents or students to such schools as Urban Day and Harambee. They want small classes, attentive teachers, discipline and a safe environment that encourages learning.

They think they are finding it.

"I never had a teacher that I felt cared about me and wanted to help me until I came to Harambee," said fourth-grader Ethan Hill, dressed in one of Harambee's forest green-and-white uniforms.

"Too many eighth-graders were picking on me because I got good grades," Elton Gofoe, 9, added. "Here, good grades are cool."

Ruthie Brown, Harambee's full-time disciplinarian, says choice provides a glimmer of hope for the children who live in its rough, gang-run neighborhood, where drive-by shootings and drugs are part of daily life.

Harambee does not tolerate bad behavior; children who are sent to Brown's basement office are told to drop to the floor and do push-ups before getting on with the work their classmates are doing upstairs. But she doesn't send children back to class without letting them know she cares about them.

"I'm doing this to save our children," said Brown, who lives in the neighborhood and has sent her children to Harambee. "We've got a lost generation out there, and we're going to lose another one unless we help them develop self-discipline and self-esteem and provide a safe place for them to learn."

Polly Williams, private school choice's leading sponsor in the state Legislature, said that the program -- unlike busing, which is still in operation in Milwaukee -- has enabled parents in inner-city black neighborhoods to play a role in their children's education.

"We did not accept that desegregation had anything to do with what our children needed," Williams said. "No matter how many parents we got together and brought to a board meeting, we were ignored. If you earned a low income and lived in a poor community, the people just dismissed you."

The Clinton Administration supports letting students attend any public school they want, but opposes private school choice.

"Parent satisfaction is very important, and it is something the public schools should try for," said Terry Peterson, counselor to Education Secretary Richard W. Riley. "But I have rarely heard that talked about as a purpose for choice. It is fine, if you pay for it out of your own pocket, but is that what the public wants? What was the original premise of public education in this

Los Angeles Times, October 22, 1993

country? To provide a common core of learning, because we have always been a nation of immigrants."

But Regis Chesir, the eighth-grader at Urban Day whose turnaround inspired his principal, says he doesn't need anyone to tell him whether choice is a good idea. For Chesir, it all comes down to one simple fact: He did not like public school, but now he can't wait to get to school in the morning.

"The students here encourage each other to get good grades," Chesir said. "And the teachers give you all the help you need."

GRAPHIC: Photo, Principal Rauh greets students at Urban Day School in Milwaukee.
JONATHON KIRN / For The Times

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

* B-Q Attack Fax cites letter from Clinton to education reformer Polly Williams praising her "visionary" approach to educating inner-city children. In the letter, Clinton expressed his concern that "The visionary is rarely embraced by the status quo." The fax implies (but does not explicitly state) that Williams backs private school choice, and cites this as an example of a Clinton flip-flop. The fax concludes with a quote from a WSJ article (8-11-92): "Bill Clinton has had some interesting education ideas in the past, but when he himself had to choose between real reform and 'the traditional Democratic establishment,' he didn't hesitate. Bill Clinton is now the pet of the teachers' unions." (BQ Attack Fax, 8-12-92)

Rhetoric: Clinton says to a Democratic legislator in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I'm for choice in education. Then he goes to the NEA, I'm not for choice of education because you won't let me be for choice in education.

Reality: Clinton's letter to a Wisconsin legislator does not indicate his support for private school vouchers, and he has never supported private school vouchers because they siphon scarce funds from the public school system. He has, however, encouraged creative thinking about and innovative approaches to educational reform and did so in this letter. Under Clinton's leadership, Arkansas was among the first states to permit parents to choose which public schools their children attend so long as an acceptable racial balance is maintained.

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SCHOOL CHOICE

The following information might be helpful in discussion of school choice.

* The Governor firmly supports public school choice. Under Clinton's leadership Arkansas was among the first states to permit parents to choose which public schools their children attend, as long as it does not result in serious racial imbalances.

* The issue of school choice defines two clear areas of distinction between Bill Clinton and George Bush:

- Bill Clinton supports public school choice and believes that federal funds should go to support public schools. He does not think we should spend tax money on private schools -- we need to improve the entire school system for the many not just the few. In contrast George Bush wants private school vouchers that will help only a limited few.

- Additionally, the Bush Administration has dubbed choice as the linchpin of their education strategy. Bill Clinton has a much broader vision of educational reform that reaches beyond a few schools competing. Clinton calls for complete reform. In addition to public school choice, Governor Clinton includes standards, accountability, curriculum improvement, safe schools, and early childhood learning as part of making American schools strong again.

* Bill Clinton believes that the federal money for vouchers could be better spent on smaller classes and better teaching, especially for the nation's most disadvantaged.

Criticisms of Bush on choice:

* George Bush has flip-flopped on the issue of school choice: In 1989 before a group of parents George Bush stated his position on private school choice as, "We can't afford to do that. It is the obligation of all taxpayers to support a public-education system. We want it to be the best." However, now when after four years of his presidency the deficit has nearly doubled George Bush has made school choice the centerpiece of his educational proposals. [Education Week, 4/5/89; Agenda for American Renewal]

* Unlike the Arkansas public choice program the Bush plan does not require schools to maintain a racial balance -- a lack of such a requirement could lead to more segregation.

* A \$1000 voucher does little to help students attend private schools where the average tuition is \$6000. [ABC, Bill Blakemore, 10/14/92] Additionally, the funds George Bush proposed would help less than 3% of the children eligible for the program. [Student numbers from the Digest of Educational Statistics, 1991]

- Frank Newman, President of the Education Commission of the States says, "The kinds of financing that are proposed don't strike me as particularly helpful to the bottom end, and particularly not helpful to the children most at risk -- the inner-city children." [ABC, 10/14/92] By contrast Bill Clinton's plans for education are to unite people instead of divide them on the issue of education.

* The money often could go to people who don't really need it. In a Colorado state voucher program parents already paying for their kids to go to private schools could get vouchers totaling \$85 million. This is money that would come out of public school budgets without improving anyone's education. [ABC, 10/14/92]

Q&A

Q: Bill Clinton has flip-flopped on the issue of school choice -- he tells the NEA he is dead against private school choice and praises a Milwaukee educator for trying it.

A: Bill Clinton's letter to a Wisconsin legislator does not indicate support for federal private school vouchers. He has, however, encouraged locally-sponsored creative thinking about and innovative approaches to educational reform and did so in this letter.

Bill Clinton supports public school choice and has made that position clear. Under Clinton's leadership Arkansas was among the first states to permit parents to choose which public schools their children attend so long as an acceptable racial balance is maintained.

Q: Why does Bill Clinton not support private school choice*

A: Governor Clinton believes that providing federal vouchers for children to go to private schools will place a drain on the already stretched state and local school budgets. Private school voucher programs are not the solution to improving education for all Americans.

Governor Clinton supports public school choice as one of several tools to strengthen American schools. Under Clinton's leadership Arkansas was among the first states to permit parents to choose which public schools their children attend so long as it does not allow for any type of racial exclusion or serious racial imbalance.

Clinton calls for complete reform. Governor Clinton's plan for lifetime learning includes: standards, accountability, curriculum improvement, safe schools, and early childhood learning as part of making American schools strong again.

HIT

*We have a letter...where the head of the trial lawyers of Arkansas said that Bill Clinton was basically in their back pocket, that Bill Clinton has always opposed tort reform of any kind...Bill Clinton is not for tort reform.

RESPONSE

Bill Clinton opposed trial lawyers when they were on opposite sides when Clinton pushed for tort reform which provided fines against those who file frivolous lawsuits, placed a short time limit for filing medical malpractice suits and immunized directors of and officers of nonprofit corporations from lawsuits. As attorney general of Arkansas, Clinton helped create a small claims court system that doesn't permit involvement by lawyers -- Arkansas is one of only 10 states with such a law. Tort suits actually dropped 10 percent in Arkansas between 1987 and 1990, the most recent statistics available.

Rhetoric:

*He writes Polly Williams, a Democrat state legislator in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, saying I'm for choice in education; then he goes to the NEA teachers union and says sorry, I'm not for choice in education because you won't let me be for choice in education.

Reality:

Clinton's letter to a Wisconsin legislator does not indicate support for private school vouchers and he has never supported private school vouchers because they siphon scarce funds from the public school system. He has, however, encouraged creative thinking and innovative approaches to educational reform and did so in his letter. Clinton supports public school choice, which he proposed and enacted in Arkansas in 1989.

HIT

*And he said that he was not for choosing--giving the parents the right to choose to send their kids to private schools.

RESPONSE

Clinton proposed and enacted public school choice in Arkansas in 1989.

9/27 MEMO

TO: Betsey
FROM: Adam
RE: BC FLIP-FLOPS FROM THE WASHINGTON TIMES, 9/27/92

The article is almost a total rehash. There are a few pieces on information and quotations that I have not seen used before. All the flip-flops listed in the article are noted below, and N.A. denotes hits that I didn't think were relevant to the Arkansas Record:

1. The State Rep. Polly Williams / private school choice letter.

The flip-flop allegation is not new, but there is a quote from Ms. Williams that I have not seen before. The Washington Times reported the quote as an interview with their paper:

"I was surprised that he was taking that stand [against private school vouchers] because that was not the stand that he took with me in his letter. I was disappointed. He definitely gave me the feeling in his letter that he strongly supported me. And he didn't indicate otherwise in subsequent meetings we had."

There is no formal write-up on this issue in the hit and response book, nor have I heard that BC and Ms. Williams had "subsequent meetings."

2. Gulf War resolution support.

Covered.

3. Payroll taxes for the national health plan.

Old hit. N.A.

4. Federal funding of abortions.

Old hit.

There is a write-up on this issue in the hit and response book, but it does not directly respond to the charge that BC has altered his position; it just states his current position, and responds to the charge that BC once equated anti-choice protesters to Vietnam-era protesters.

5. CAFE standards.

Old hit. N.A.

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DRAFT

DRAFT

DRAFT

M E M O

TO: Terry Peterson

CC: Mike Smith
Jon Schnur

FROM: Bill Kincaid

DATE: March 17, 1996

RE: Clinton Letter to Polly Williams

You have asked me to research Bill Clinton's 1990 letter to Wisconsin State Representative Polly Williams. Here is what I have found out, and some related thoughts:

The Letter

On October 15, 1990, then-Gov. Clinton wrote Rep. Williams, the author of Wisconsin's original Milwaukee voucher legislation. The entire text (attached) is as follows:

Dear Polly:

I read Don Lambro's recent column about your version of the school choice bill in Milwaukee. I am fascinate by that proposal an am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by the status quo.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

[Bill Clinton]

The letter came up in the 1992 campaign. A September 27, 1990 Washington Times article quoted Rep. Williams as saying:

I was surprised that he was taking that stand [against private school vouchers] because that was not the stand that he took with me in his letter. I was disappointed. He definitely gave me the feeling in his letter that he strongly supported me. And he didn't indicate otherwise in subsequent meetings we had.

More recently, Williams and others have used the letter and Chelsea's attendance at Sidwell

to argue that “Bill Clinton shouldn’t be the only person in public housing to send his kid to private school.”

The Column

There seems not to have been any incoming letter. Rather, Clinton was apparently responding to Donald Lambro’s September 27, 1990 column, “Political Shifts on Education’s Battlefield.” The column describes a Sept. 17, 1990 event in DC, attended by many conservative activists, celebrating Williams’ success enacting the Milwaukee legislation. According to the column, the event marked the third week of the Milwaukee program.

The column states Williams “won enactment of her school choice program in the face of bitter opposition from the educational establishment, scorn from liberal white Democratic lawmakers, deep hostility from the local news media, and benign neglect from her national party.” The column singles out the NAACP, “liberal congressional Democrats” like Sen. Kennedy, and Ron Brown. The column also says “some support is now being heard from [the D.L.C.] whose . . . magazine features a piece on Polly Williams’ plan.”¹

The 1992 Response

During the 1992 campaign, Clinton took the position that he supported public school choice, but opposed private school vouchers/tax credits. Talking points were developed (and apparently used -- at least they are reflected in an October, 1992 USA Today article) with respect to the Williams letter, although it does not appear that anything written was ever distributed to the press on this topic.

The 1992 response was that Clinton’s letter did not indicate his support for private school vouchers, that he never supported vouchers because they drain funds from public schools. Rather, Clinton has supported creative thinking about and innovative approaches to education reform -- and did so in the letter. It was also stressed that under Clinton’s leadership, Arkansas was among the first states to allow parents to choose among public schools. Bottom line: Clinton’s letter did not endorse the idea of private school vouchers, but was only encouraging the search for innovation, something that he has consistently advocated.

Additional analysis

The letter says that Clinton is “fascinated” by the proposal and is having his staff “analyze it.” That is a far cry from endorsing the policy, much less advocating that it be adopted in Arkansas or nationally. Clinton’s clear empathy for Williams’ struggle to find local solutions to educational problems does not amount to support for her solution.

¹In my research I also found an Elaine Kamarck opinion piece from New York Newsday, dated April 30, 1990, in which Williams’ efforts are lauded.

If congressional voucher advocates press the issue, the President should stand firm on the position he clearly adopted in 1992. As Clarence Page pointed out in a March 14, 1996 column, "Clinton has good reason to be skeptical about vouchers. So do the rest of us." Page notes that, five years after the Milwaukee program was established, the results have been decidedly mixed. Contrasted with anecdotes of individual success stories, two of the 17 Milwaukee schools have failed, and two more are on the "critical list" with severe financial problems. Moreover, as of February, almost 200 out of 1,476 students participating this school year had dropped out of the program since September. Vouchers, Page says "are less a panacea than a last resort. They offer a triage approach, like combat medics who must perform the grim task of deciding who can be saved and who cannot. Vouchers cream off the most fortunate of the least fortunate, the students who have the brightest minds and the most conscientious parents, and leave behind the rest to fend for themselves." The President supports comprehensive education reform to benefit all students, not just a chosen few.

Attachments:

Letter to Polly Williams
Lambro column

03-15-1996 08:49
AUG 12 '92 16144

501 399 7196
FROM

CLINTON TRANS.

P. 02/08



STATE OF ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Little Rock, Arkansas

Bill Clinton
Governor

OCT 8 8 1996

October 18, 1996

Representative Polly Williams
State Capitol
Room 10 East
P. O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Polly:

I read Don Lambro's recent column about your version of the school choice bill in Milwaukee. I am fascinated by that proposal and am having my staff analyze it. I'm concerned that the traditional Democratic Party establishment has not given you more encouragement. The visionary is rarely embraced by status quo.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton

BC:stairz

16TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Washington Times

September 27, 1990, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: Part G; COMMENTARY; Pg. G4

LENGTH: 901 words

HEADLINE: Political shifts on education's battlefield

BYLINE: Donald Lambro; THE WASHINGTON TIMES

BODY:

When Wisconsin state Rep. Polly Williams arrived here last week to celebrate her long but victorious struggle to enact a school choice program for her poor Milwaukee constituents, this town's leading conservatives turned out to greet her as a conquering hero.

It was a scene that would have been politically unimaginable not too many years ago.

Yet as this fiery and highly articulate black Democratic lawmaker, who served as the Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1988 state campaign chairwoman, looked out over the Capitol Hill crowd that cheered her, she must have been struck by the irony of this overwhelmingly right-wing audience warmly embracing her cause.

Despite her dramatic legislative feat which allows children in her poor inner-city district to have the option of attending local private schools, no liberal Democratic leaders were present at the gathering to proclaim their support for her remarkable achievement.

She wasn't surprised. Indeed, she won enactment of her school choice program in the face of bitter opposition from the educational establishment, scorn from liberal white Democratic lawmakers, deep hostility from the local news media and benign neglect from her national party.

The NAACP certainly wasn't there. Her local NAACP chapter teamed up with the teachers unions to try to kill her program. Liberal congressional Democrats like Massachusetts Sen. Edward Kennedy, who profess such compassion for poor minorities, have similarly ignored her efforts. Nor has Democratic National Chairman Ron Brown shown any interest in highlighting her proposal as a model for other inner cities.

The reason: By giving the parents of 1,000 academically eligible black children the choice of entering local private schools to improve their education, her program will inject competition into America's deteriorating public school system. The teacher unions want none of that and the politicians who tow their line aren't going to touch it with a 10-foot pole either.

The Washington Times, September 27, 1990

But along the way her little program - which is now being considered by 14 state legislatures - has won the enthusiastic support of the politically conservative school-choice crowd. And it was this gang that showed up at last week's gala reception, sponsored by the Heritage Foundation and the Landmark Legal Foundation for Civil Rights, to sing her praises and applaud her program as the best way to lift inner-city minorities out of poverty. Vice President Dan Quayle served as honorary chairman of the event.

The list of those who were there to profess their political support for Mrs. Williams' program read like a Who's Who of the Republican right. Among them: former Delaware Gov. Pete du Pont, Wisconsin Sen. Bob Kasten, Rep. Steve Bartlett of Texas, Heritage President Ed Feulner, Robert Woodson, president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, and Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation.

On the left, only Brookings Institution scholar John Chubb is an enthusiastic supporter, though some support is now being heard from the Democratic Leadership Council whose Mainstream Democrat magazine features a piece on Polly Williams' plan.

But the loudest cheers have been on the right where conservatives are regrouping for a new parental choice assault on the educational establishment. With achievement scores continuing to decline, and our inner-city schools in a state of paralysis, no one could disagree with Landmark president Jerald Hill's remarks: "We have failed our children for too long. Particularly in our inner cities [where] public schools have been in a seemingly irreversible spiral of failure. Education choice is a way to save our schools and our children."

The day of Polly Williams' celebration, Sept. 17, marked the third week of the program in which 440 poor Milwaukee kids have chosen an alternative school other than the public school to which they had been assigned. The plan will ultimately provide up to 1,000 low-income students with \$2,500 each in state funds to attend a private, non-sectarian school of their choice, and more are signing up each day.

The local education bureaucracy has fought the plan in the courts - though last month a Wisconsin Circuit Court upheld its constitutionality - and is prepared to take their challenge all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary. Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Herbert Grover, who is leading the opposition, is roundly condemned by Mrs. Williams' supporters as "the Darth Vader of the educational establishment." And with good reason.

He and the teachers unions argue that the Williams plan to help inner-city children will destroy the public schools. But she sees her legislation providing the kind of competition that is needed to force the public schools to improve the services they provide.

"People say we're anti-public school, but we're not," she told her supporters. "We're just leveraging the public schools by telling them that if you don't improve, there will be more choice schools. We're just giving them a little motivation."

Still, while her movement is growing, millions of parents remain unaware of Polly Williams and her idea. It's time she received the national attention she

The Washington Times, September 27, 1990

deserves.

Donald Lambro, chief political correspondent of The Washington Times, is a nationally syndicated columnist.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Polly Williams

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH