

DEMOCRACY THREATENED IN FLORIDA

In November, Floridians are slated to vote on two amendments to their state's constitution that would, if approved, allow for school vouchers. But on June 13, an array of groups filed suit asking the Second Circuit to block the vote. Following the suit we noted that if the Second Circuit answered the calls of these groups, democracy would be threatened in Florida.

The Florida Constitution contains provisions of what was once known as the Blaine Amendment. Those provisions, which also appear in the constitutions of 36 other states, were written to prohibit Catholic schools in the 19th century from receiving state aid. Ironically, Catholic schools were founded in direct response to the anti-Catholic bigotry found in the public schools. No matter, when parochial schools asked for state assistance, they were met with amendments to state constitutions that followed the lead of Senator James Blaine, a virulent anti-Catholic. It is precisely the Blaine Amendment provisions to the Florida constitution that the electorate wants to vote on in November. But now the anti-religious forces want to disenfranchise them.

The following organizations asked the court to block the vote and are in favor of disenfranchising Floridians: ACLU, ADL, Americans for Separation of Church and State and People for the American Way; various teachers unions and education organizations, such as the Florida School Boards Association, the Florida Education Association and the Florida Association of School Administrators, backed the suit.

Why were these groups so afraid of the November vote that they went as far as to ask the Second Circuit to remove the vote from the ballot? Is it because they know that if given the opportunity, the people of Florida could vote to abolish the

Blaine Amendment? We know that these groups have track records a mile long when it comes to opposing religious liberty, as well as any kind of choice issue (except for killing babies in the womb). Now they are trying to stop people from deciding what kind of education system they want.

Perhaps these despots should have looked at the Department of Education's June 16 report reaffirming the academic gains for students in the Washington, D.C. area that received federally funded scholarships; one student was the valedictorian of her class.

In the 1960s, the slogan "Power to the People" rolled off the tongues of every radical. Now that they've aged, they've done a 180—nothing bothers them more than letting the people decide how they want to be governed. Which explains their fondness for judicial tyranny.