

DISHONEST ANTI-VOUCHER TV ADS PULLED IN MICHIGAN

In October, a Florida appeals ruled that a school voucher program that targeted poor families was constitutional. But in November, ballot initiatives that would allow vouchers lost in Michigan and California.

The Catholic League, which views school choice as a civil right, gets involved in the issue when anti-Catholicism emerges. That is why it jumped on a patently dishonest set of TV ads that the anti-choice contingent in Michigan was pushing. After the Catholic League contacted virtually every TV outlet in the state, the ads were pulled from many from stations.

Television ads, run by "ALL Kids First!", showed a disabled child in a wheelchair featuring the statement, "private schools are allowed to reject disabled students like Angelica." But as the Michigan Catholic Conference said, "this is a deliberately false statement and represents a new low in political campaign advertisements in Michigan." In fact, Michigan law bars discrimination against persons with disabilities independent of whether the school is public or private.

The Catholic League outlined its concerns in a statement to the media:

"There are no taboos in the portfolio of the anti-school choice forces in Michigan. They have distorted the truth, promoted anti-Catholicism and have now resorted to out and out lying. Instead of making their case on the merits of the voucher plan, they engage in demagoguery in order to scare the dispossessed from claiming their rights. Indeed, their interest in the well being of the handicapped is on a par with

their interest in the poor: they will exploit both groups in order to protect their monopoly.

“Ironically, the same forces which today feign concern for the handicapped were the very ones who lost in 1993 in their bid to stop public funds from being spent on handicapped children who attend sectarian schools; the Catholic League was proud to file an amicus brief in *Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills School District* on behalf of the handicapped.

“It is bad enough to work against the poor and disabled without also lying about it. It is time the leaders of the anti-voucher movement took a course in character education. But not in a public school.”

Whenever the day comes when this issue can be resolved without demagoguery, vouchers may well win in the end. In the meantime, everywhere this issue emerges, it is fodder for anti-Catholics. Which is why the Catholic League will continue to monitor school choice.