

# KUDOS TO GOVERNOR JINDAL

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal is a practicing Catholic who is fighting for the rights of the Catholic Church, as well as minority students. On August 23, 2013, Governor Jindal discovered that Attorney General Eric Holder would be suing his state claiming that Jindal's voucher program violates civil rights laws. The purpose of the voucher program is to provide children who attend failing schools a chance to go to a better public school or enroll in a private school. According to the Department of Justice, the program could potentially hinder the federal desegregation rules that are present throughout several Louisiana parishes that date back to the Civil Rights era. In the name of racial justice, Holder is promoting the very thing civil rights was supposed to combat.

Louisiana's successful voucher program contains two requirements for prospective recipients. Students who receive a voucher must come from a family with an income that is below the 250 percent poverty line and be enrolled in a failing school. A student who meets these two requirements is then considered to be eligible for a voucher. Rather than put the money toward their local school, the money is used for the tuition at a private school or a reputable public school. The governor's office reveals that 90 percent of voucher recipients in Louisiana are minorities.

A petition created by the DOJ claims that federal desegregation orders are being violated by the voucher program. The 1975 equal protection case that was decided by the Fifth Circuit concluded that Louisiana could not grant money to private schools in certain school districts because doing so would encourage various types of segregation or discrimination. Two examples have been used by the DOJ to defend their argument that vouchers have promoted segregation or discrimination in public schools. Independent Elementary in

Tangipahoa Parish is a predominantly black school that lost five white students to other schools. A school in St. Martin Parish called Cecilia Primary School is predominantly white and lost six black students. According to the DOJ, both of these instances reversed the progress that has been made toward integration.

Evidence from across the U.S. illustrates that vouchers actually enhance racial integration. Students are offered an opportunity to enroll in schools that they otherwise would not be able to attend. Private schools that accept students who receive vouchers have a more diverse student body than public schools. It is ironic that the DOJ is attempting to use civil rights laws to force minority students to remain in failing schools. Doing so challenges the protections that were implemented in the first place. Jindal believes that education is a civil rights issue and he is more than willing to fight for it.