

Proposition 174

On Nov. 2, the country will be watching intently as Californians go to the polls to decide whether or not to embrace education vouchers.

Proposition 174, the Parental Choice in Education Initiative, would require the state to provide a voucher for \$2,600 per year to students wishing to transfer out of the public-school system to help defray the costs of private school education.

Under the terms of 174, for the first three years only, students transferring from public to private schools would be eligible for vouchers; after that, vouchers would be available to new students wishing to enroll in private schools.

Proponents of 174 contend that its passage would allow parents to exercise choice in the matter of educating their children while saving the state money. Some people, though, have expressed concern that once federal money is used for private education, federal control of private schools will follow.

The Wanderer reports that the Catholic bishops of California have not taken an official stand on the initiative because they do not consider themselves experts in this matter. The bishops are encouraging parents to discuss the issue and a video explaining 174's details has been circulated.

According to *The Wanderer*, the NEA and the California Teachers' Association are engaged in an all-out effort to defeat the initiative which, if passed, would make significant inroads into the public education monopoly.

Proposition 174 is supported by business leaders who are dismayed by the large numbers of poorly educated young people entering the work force. Echoing these concerns, former California Governor George Deukmejian endorsed school choice as "our best hope for substantially improving the quality of

education for all children in California.”

It is likely that even if proposition 174 passes, it will be subject to constitutional challenges which will delay its implementation.