

SCHOOL CHOICE INCHES FORWARD

Utah and New York are making strides in the battle for school choice, following the lead of Arizona. Newark, New Jersey, is also making waves. On the run are the teachers' unions; they will do nearly anything to maintain their government-created near-monopoly on education.

In February, the Utah House approved a private voucher program—by one vote—that would have dramatic results. It would give families a school voucher that would range from \$500 to \$3,000, based on their income. Republicans largely supported the bill and Democrats largely opposed it.

New York State Governor Eliot Spitzer's education budget was revealed at the start of February. It was good news for Catholics. In 2002, then-New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer released a "Report on Non-Public Education" that explored many ways in which public aid to parochial schools could be achieved without violating the First Amendment. Last year, Spitzer, who is a Democrat, endorsed the concept of tuition tax credits, and now as New York State Governor he is making good on his commitment.

Spitzer's budget proposal calls for a \$1,000 tax break for families who elect to send their children to parochial schools.

For several years now, there has been an ongoing fight in Arizona between those who believe in school choice and those who, like the ACLU and the education establishment, oppose it. The Arizona legislature has authorized corporate donors a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for contributions to private, non-profit school tuition organizations. The matter is now before the courts—for the third time!

Newark's Mayor Cory Booker is one of the nation's leading supporters of school choice. He is following the Arizona model

by proposing tax credits of \$20 million a year collectively for corporations which support scholarships for low-income students in five cities with troubled schools.

As might be expected, the public school industry is opposing these inclusive approaches to education. It prefers the politics of exclusion and is decidedly anti-choice: the public school teachers' unions, always threatened by competition, would like to deny any tax relief for parents—many of them poor—who prefer a Catholic school to a public one. In many cases, this is tantamount to condemning the poor to access services no rich person would ever choose.

It is no secret that Catholic schools in the inner city have proven to be one of the most important causative agents allowing for upward mobility. That those who claim an allegiance to the poor would balk at school choice proposals shows how hypocritical they are. But they are fighting an uphill battle as more and more African Americans and Latinos are demanding a fair shake in education.