

# TRUMP'S EDUCATION PICK UNDER FIRE

Bill Donohue comments on Donald Trump's Education pick:

The Senate is expected to hold hearings next week on Betsy DeVos, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Secretary of Education. As soon as he announced his choice on November 23, anti-school choice activists attacked her.

The ACLU immediately went on the offensive warning that "private and parochial schools" would benefit. Such a condition it said, "perverts the bedrock American value of separation of church and state."

There is a reason the ACLU never mentioned the "bedrock American value" of religious liberty. When it was founded in 1920, it listed every right incorporated in the First Amendment as one of its top ten priorities, save for freedom of religion. Ever since, it has worked tirelessly against this right, the exception being the religious rights of prisoners, Muslim extremists, and the like.

Also attacking DeVos on the day she was nominated was the Interfaith Alliance. It is so opposed to religious liberty that it has tried to stop the installation of war memorials honoring veterans if they mention God. Its opposition to the Marriage and Religious Freedom Act, which defends marriage between a man and a woman, showed its ideological colors. It has also tried to censor me: in 2010, it joined with other left-wing groups lobbying TV producers never to invite me again.

The third organization to rip DeVos was Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Founded as a virulently anti-Catholic group in the 1940s, it is led by Barry Lynn today. He accused DeVos of mounting a "*crusade* to create school vouchers

across the country.” Notice his *italic*. Betsy the Crusader is coming to Washington!

Katherine Stewart, writing in the *New York Times*, agrees with Lynn, citing a comment DeVos made in 2001 saying educational reform is a way to “advance God’s kingdom.” Terrifying. That should all but seal her fate. Had a nominee invoked Satan’s kingdom, it would be seen as free speech, if not applauded.

The public school establishment is, of course, leading the charge. Michael Mulgrew of the United Federation of Teachers warns that school choice would undermine public education in New York City, which is “moving in the right direction.” In point of fact, Mayor Bill de Blasio’s decision to award failing schools in New York with *more funding* turned out to be a monumental failure. After spending 839 million dollars, almost all these schools failed to meet expected standards.

Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association, is predictably upset. “Betsy DeVos is not qualified,” she said, “and even more than unqualified, Betsy DeVos is an actual danger to students—especially our most vulnerable students.” Of course, it is precisely “the most vulnerable students” who stand to benefit the most by giving their parents the same opportunity that Barack and Michelle Obama have had in sending Sasha and Malia to private schools.

Best of all is the argument made by some faculty members at the University of Cincinnati. “DeVos is unqualified.” Why? “DeVos has no relevant credentials in education, no formal training or experience in teaching, and no advanced knowledge of educational research.” That’s her strength: she hasn’t been corrupted by the credentialized class. She knows what works, which is more than can be said about many of those with initials after their name.

These activists and educrats are scared to death of allowing parents the right to choose which school to send their

children to, knowing full well that they might opt to select a charter school, non-denominational private school, Christian school, Catholic school, or a yeshiva.

Betsy DeVos deserves a fair hearing. That means turning a blind eye to the demagogues and the foes of religious liberty out to sunder her.

*To read Bill Donohue's article on school choice that appears in the January/February edition of Catalyst, the Catholic League journal, click [here](#).*