

# VOUCHER VICTORY

November 9 was a bad day for the enemies of choice in education: that was the day the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling that found no legal problem with the Wisconsin voucher program. Because the high court did not actually rule on the merits of a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling that said okay to vouchers, it did not set national legal precedent. Nonetheless, it gave the green light to the pro-voucher side.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court decision that was left standing allows for taxpayer-funded vouchers for religious schools. The Wisconsin program provides for as many as 15,000 Milwaukee children to attend private or parochial schools, fully 15 percent of the city's total school enrollment. This initiative gives vouchers worth approximately \$5,000 to any child in a family whose income is near the poverty level. It is a major academic success, but one that is resisted by teacher unions.

Speaking about success, the results are in on New York City's voucher program. The privately-funded program, School Choice Scholarship Foundation, provides 1,000 tuition vouchers for private or parochial schools, the distribution of which goes to students who attend the worst-ranked schools in the city. After just two years, reading and math grades for students in grades 2 and 3 posted modest gains, while dramatic increases were registered in grades 4 and 5.

Commenting on the results of New York's program, Harvard professor Paul Peterson said, "nuns can really deliver education." As expected, most of the students in the program elected to go to Catholic schools, as opposed to the more expensive private schools (the vouchers were worth \$1,400). Too bad the public school industry doesn't catch on to what's happening.

And speaking of that, why is it that the public school bureaucrats can't refrain from making derisive comments about this subject? For example, last summer, we wrote to John T. Benson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Wisconsin, asking him to explain his comment, "Will Timothy McVeigh start the next church in Milwaukee and see this as a profit-making venture and solicit enrollment and succeed?"

We are pleased to note that State Superintendent Benson has admitted to us in writing that he regrets making this remark. "Your criticism was certainly appropriate," he said. And his letter is certainly an appropriate response to our complaint.