

# VOUCHERS GAIN GROUND

Florida has become the first state to put forward a statewide voucher program. Led by Governor Jeb Bush, this program has far-reaching consequences and will be looked at carefully by friend and foe alike. The purpose of the program is to target those students who are attending failed public schools by giving them a chance to go to a private or parochial school.

In New York, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has unveiled plans to spend \$12 million on a school voucher program, the funding of which will come from his office.

The Catholic League wasted no time offering its support for the mayor's plan:

"By supporting vouchers and braving the public school industry, Mayor Giuliani has proven once again that he is prepared to put the best interests of children first, even if it means angering those whose only agenda is to protect a failed monopoly.

"The incredible record that private and parochial schools have in educating the so-called uneducable makes opposition to vouchers morally suspect. No one who truly believes in helping the poor can logically be opposed to school choice anymore. The success of the Children's Scholarship Fund, announced this week, is one more piece of evidence that school choice is what parents want.

"On March 17, in a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, dozens of 'progressive' activist organizations and labor unions registered their fear that vouchers will succeed. Most interesting to us was the comment that 'public funds should not be used to send our city's children to *religious or other* private schools.' (Our emphasis.) This is telling: the real fear is that if parents are given a choice, many will opt to send their kids to a Catholic school. The anti-choice

crowd needs to explain why this is troubling.

“One reason why Catholic students do so well is because of discipline. And having a dress code means that Nazi kids don’t walk the halls wearing black trench coats. Nor do they show up with their Satanic T-shirts. Come to think of it, they don’t have metal rings hanging from their nostrils either. And yet—given all these restrictions on ‘freedom of expression’—they are all capable of reading their diploma on graduation day.”

Though there have been, and will continue to be, occasional legal setbacks, the future is on the side of vouchers. There is a momentum in the land that cannot be stopped.