

WARREN DECLARES WAR ON THE POOR

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Elizabeth Warren's new education policy:

When it comes to education, there is no better way to punish the poor than to deny them the same opportunities the affluent have. Here's the drill: Keep the poor away from charter schools and away from private schools, especially Catholic schools in the inner city. Make sure to defend the unions to the hilt, knowing full well they will always put the best interests of teachers and administrators ahead of the best interests of students. And, best of all, reward failing schools with *more money*.

This is what Elizabeth Warren is doing—in the name of helping the poor she is declaring war on them. Forget about her intentions, the effect of her plan is to consign black and brown kids to schools that no sane white person would ever choose for his own kids.

Warren wants to spend another \$800 billion in federal dollars on elementary and secondary education, more than half of which would go to students from poor families. She offers no data that show how effective it is to spend more money on education, and that is because it doesn't exist.

A researcher at the Cato Institute, Andrew J. Coulson, studied the results of national assessment tests and correlated academic performance with state funding. He found "there is essentially no link between state education spending (which has exploded) and the performance of students at the end of high school (which has generally stagnated or declined)."

If money mattered, then students in the District of Columbia would be at the top of the academic charts—more money is spent

per capita on these students than is spent on students in any of the 50 states—yet they are always in last place. If the money=better academic achievement equation were true, states like New Hampshire and the Dakotas would be at the bottom, yet they are always near the top, notwithstanding meager funding per capita. Similarly, Alaska has one of the most well-funded school systems, yet ranks near the bottom in academic achievement.

Warren hates the one public school initiative that works, namely charter schools. She is now boasting that she will end more federal money for charter schools, and stop for-profit charters altogether. When confronted with evidence that charter schools in her home state of Massachusetts work well, she did not deny it. But data mean nothing to ideologues.

She also wants to make it easier for teachers to unionize, thus ensuring the poor will stay where they are (what is going on in Chicago is a textbook example). The public school establishment is opposed to every school choice program, yet the lack of competition—which works well in every other segment of the economy—effectively stops the poor from becoming upwardly mobile.

Someone needs to ask Warren why she wants to deny school choice to parents who live in D.C. when it is clear that this initiative works. For instance, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which helps students from poor families to attend private schools, experienced a 21 percentage point increase in graduation rates.

I taught in a Catholic school in Spanish Harlem and saw firsthand how well poor Puerto Rican and African American students could do when presented with structure and a curricula focused on basic educational skills. There was no money for frills, no room for experimental programs, and no excessive administrative costs. But there was plenty of homework and plenty of discipline in the classroom. These

students did well not because of money, but because tried and true academic methods were the rule.

“With fully funded vouchers, parents of all income levels could send their children—and the accompanying financial support—to the schools of their choice.”

So true. This is what Elizabeth Warren said in 2003.

She needs to explain what changed. What data made her the enemy of school choice? Absent empirical evidence, we are left with the impression that she is prepared to keep the poor in their place, just so she can win the support of the teachers' unions.