



Vouchers By Any Name: Tax Credit Scholarships, Direct Public Subsidies Imperil Religious Freedom

Voucher schemes – whether direct subsidies from the state or backdoor vouchers like tax credits “scholarships” – open the door to state support for religious instruction and indoctrination. In some cases they even subsidize instruction that promotes discrimination.

- Many religious schools accepting tax credit scholarships use textbooks from fringe publishers. One textbook from A Beka Book, for example, teaches that “much variety within the human race has developed from the eight people who left the Ark” after the great flood in the Bible.ⁱ That claim **echoes long-discredited doctrines that have been used for centuries to justify racism.**
- Nearly a quarter of the schools that participate in Georgia’s tax credit scholarship program **require families to make a profession of religious faith.** Many of those schools adhere to a fundamentalist brand of Christianity. A commonly used sixth-grade science text simply retells the creation story contained in Genesis, omitting any other explanation for the development and diversity of life. An economics book used in some high schools holds that the Antichrist — a world ruler predicted in the New Testament — will one day control what is bought and sold.ⁱⁱ
- Three civil liberties organizations filed a lawsuit in January 2013 against a New Hampshire tax credit voucher program, arguing that the scheme **violates the state constitution because it diverts taxpayer funds to religious schools.** The program also includes **no state oversight of the schools receiving the tax credit vouchers,** which means religious schools would be able to use the funds for religious instruction, indoctrination and discrimination.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Louisiana lawmakers **have objected to the use of their state’s sweeping voucher program to subsidize tuition at Muslim and other non-Christian schools.** For example, Louisiana Rep. Valarie Hodges, R-Watson, said she had “liked the idea of giving parents the option of sending their children to a public school or a Christian school.” But she opposes funding vouchers for Muslim schools: “Unfortunately [these vouchers] will not be limited to the Founders’ religion. We need to insure that it does not open the door to fund radical Islam schools. There are a thousand Muslim schools that have sprung up recently. I do not support using public funds for teaching Islam anywhere here in Louisiana.”^{iv}

ⁱ “Public Money Finds Back Door to Private Schools,” New York Times, May 21, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/22/education/scholarship-funds-meant-for-needy-benefit-private-schools.html>

ⁱⁱ “Public Money Finds Back Door to Private Schools, New York Times, May 21, 2012,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/22/education/scholarship-funds-meant-for-needy-benefit-private-schools.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ “School Organizations Say Tuition Tax-Credit Program Violates New Hampshire Constitution,” Americans United for Separation of Church and State, <https://au.org/media/press-releases/americans-united-aclu-challenge-new-hampshire-state-funding-of-religious>

^{iv} “Hodges now leery of Jindal reform,” *Livingston Parish News*, June 29, 2012.
http://m.livingstonparishnews.com/mobile/news/article_6c2da5fe-c1e5-11e1-ae3b-0019bb2963f4.html