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FAX ALERT

AROUND THE REFORM WORLD IN 90 DAYS

April 23, 1999 From Florida to California, the state halls are rocking with action on school choice, charter schools and union efforts. The Center for Education Reform (CER) is pleased to provide you with this unique in-depth glimpse at education policy in the making, from some key states where some of the Center's 20,000 members and friends are most involved:

- The big news story lately is **Florida** where both houses have passed versions of Governor Jeb Bush's education package. The school choice provision is getting its share of arrows, but has squeaked through the Senate with enough support to allow some version to pass later this spring in conference. Some Senators hope to weaken the bill enough that choice proponents won't want the bill. Political will, however, is likely to drive home a viable choice program from the state of Florida.
- The other day, the head of the American Federation of Teachers said (paraphrasing) that the unions needed to do more to combat "the attacks" of assorted reform proponents and work harder to kill the various bills for choice and reform that are pending. In **California** the unions are doing just that by trying to roll back the authority charter schools have to operate in a union-free environment. A bill to require collective bargaining in all California. Charter schools is pending. The unique alliance of grassroots educators and Silicon Valley execs that once improved California's charter bill is now gearing up to fight this assault on choice.
- Lawmakers in **Massachusetts** are fed-up with the union's actions and have put a significant amount of weight behind a bill to curb collective bargaining excesses in the Commonwealth. Democratic Speaker Thomas Finneran wants administrators to have flexibility over hiring, curriculum, and other school issues often mandated in union contracts.
- **Arkansas** legislators improved that state's very weak charter bill earlier this month, by opening up the approval process and allowing for a binding appeal.
- In other news: A school choice bill is also in a showdown in Texas another is just being heard in committee in Pennsylvania, and a third is the subject of a May 4 special session in New Mexico. Charter school legislation is now pending with a strong chance for passage in Oregon, and in Tennessee, a horribly weak bill is teetering on the brink of passage. More news on these and others will be found in your forthcoming *Monthly Letter to Friends*, or weekly via CER's Hotline, at 887-433-8228.

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The Center for Education Reform is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization founded in 1993 to provide support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools. For additional information on school choice, contact CER at (202) 822-9000 or visit our website at www.edreform.com



FAX ALERT

AROUND THE REFORM WORLD IN 30 DAYS

May 24, 1999 The last 30 days have been filled with exciting education reform action. The Center for Education Reform (CER) is pleased to provide you with this unique in-depth glance at education policy in the making, from some key states where some of the Center's 25,000 members and friends are most involved.

- In **Oregon**, months of planning and concerted effort are paying off for folks committed to education reform – Governor John Kitzhaber is days away from signing charter school legislation and a companion alternative teacher licensing bill. Representative Ron Sunseri, the Center for Educational Change, and the Cascade Policy Institute led the successful reform effort. Charter schools will be essentially unlimited and up to 50% of the teachers may be uncertified prior to teaching at the charter school. Congratulations, Oregon!
- **Minnesota** is one step closer to making its charter school law the strongest in the nation. On May 17th, the Minnesota legislature passed legislation that will improve Minnesota's already good charter school law. The new law adds \$3 million in start-up funds and \$6 million in funds to help with leases and other building expenses. It also allows cooperatives to sponsor charter schools for the first time. This only increases the number of educational choices for Minnesota's parents and students.
- The **New Hampshire** House passed a school choice bill by a narrow margin of 172-171. Under this plan, parents and students that attend schools that fall into the lower third of the state academically would be allowed to choose a different school if they make 300% of the poverty level or less. Stay tuned to hear about this bill's progress in the Senate.
- And keep your eye on **Oklahoma** this week. Mighty efforts are underway to get a strong charter school law for the students of Oklahoma in this last week of the legislative session. CER president Jeanne Allen was invited to address the legislature on May 21, 1999. Her efforts may well prove instrumental in bringing about a positive outcome for charter schools there. CER additionally rallied the national charter school community by writing opinion pieces for key newspapers across the state.

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AROUND THE REFORM WORLD IN 30 DAYS

June 30, 1999 As a fitting lead to Independence day, reformers over this past month have proved that freedom does indeed ring in states and communities nationwide:

- **Ohio's** legislature re-enacted Cleveland's school choice program and extended it into 6th and 7th grades through 2000 and 2001 respectively. The 1995 program (which helps some of the city's poorest children) was ruled invalid by the state Supreme Court on a technicality, and the legislature had to reauthorize it for the program to continue.
- **Virginia's** *Standards of Learning*, thought to be among the highest in the nation, are serving as a model now for teachers, too. The State Board of Education has adopted the highest standards nationwide for English and math teachers. Believe it or not, some people are actually critical of the move.
- **Milwaukee** is once again making news. This time, the public school system has struck an unprecedented bargain with the Catholic school system. The superintendents of both systems have agreed to share resources, including staff developing, training, technology, and after school programs, to name a few areas.
- With the ink just dry on **Florida's** new accountability package, the state released scores last week showing 78 schools having failed basic measures of accountability. Two of those schools have Fs for two years or more, paving the way for children in those schools to get vouchers. So far, the NAACP and ACLU are standing with some union and other establishment groups in a lawsuit to stop the program.
- Meanwhile, **New York's** first eight charters were approved and our congratulations go to the Albany Urban League, the Learning Project and Boys Harbor, among others, for being pioneers in helping children succeed.

The *Monthly Letter to Friends* reviewing June's progress should be at your door step today, and is already available on line. Have a safe and happy Fourth of July.

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