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## **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

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# Florida's Governor Explains His Charter School Choice

Your editorial "A Charter Setback in Florida" (Jan. 7) might lead some people to infer that my administration is not a champion of school choice. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, as a state senator I co-sponsored the original 1996 legislation that created charter schools in Florida. Florida now ranks third nationally in the number of charter schools and fourth in the number of charter-school students, and I am committed to championing school choice in Florida.

Charter schools are not only critical to a successful public education system, but they also represent the ingenuity of communities throughout the Sunshine State.

Florida has made great strides when it comes to education, as evidenced by the "2009 Quality Counts: Portrait of a Population" report released this week. Issued annually by "Education Week," the report tracks state policies and performance across key areas of education. Florida's education ranking jumped from 14th to 10th in the nation, and its overall grade improved from a C+ to a B-. Among our many achievements, we are also closing the achievement gap between minority students and white students -- and have even eliminated it when you consider the number of Florida's Hispanic students passing Advanced Placement exams in 2007. Students in the Sunshine State excel in AP course participation and performance, with more than one-fifth of 2007 graduates passing an AP exam.

These successes undeniably reveal that Florida is on the right track, and charter schools are an important part of our success. The decision not to appeal to the Florida Supreme Court was a difficult one based on many factors, but in no way reflects on my commitment to school choice, charter schools, and the value of independent authorizers of charter schools. The likelihood of the appeal's victory appeared questionable at best. As a result, we are taking action to work with the Florida Legislature to modify Florida law to ensure the future success of Florida's charter schools. This approach is surely a more prudent use of taxpayer resources.

**Gov. Charlie Crist**