

Center for Education Reform



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FAX ALERT

PENNSYLVANIA CHOICE EFFORT: TECHNICAL KNOCK-OUT

(6/19/95) Governor Tom Ridge conceded defeat of his school choice proposal late Friday night, falling only seven votes short in the House of those needed for passage. While Ridge was obviously disappointed he vowed to continue his visible effort in the fall. "I'll be here for four years," he said. "It's only been six months so far."

Among the five states to have unsuccessfully considered choice this year, Pennsylvania stands out among them based on the amount of people involved, the media war, and the Governor's strength on the issue. Education reform was and remains a top priority for Ridge. School choice dominated the news in Pennsylvania for several weeks, and coverage over the last three days alone was front page material and the lead story on the nightly news.

The bill would have provided grants of \$700 and \$1,000 to elementary and secondary school students respectively, phasing in at the \$15,000 level in certain districts and expanding gradually over 5 years to all students in the state from families whose income is \$70,000 or less.

Nationally, this was the largest effort so far to have made it to the floor of the legislature for a vote. It had the support of 20 Democrats, while 27 Republicans deserted the Governor.

Although the result of this vote does not provide immediate victory, this is a giant step for the reform movement nationwide.

Ridge's proposals for charter schools and contracting out were uncertain as of Friday. There was also a possibility that the Senate would vote on school choice before the legislature adjourns on June 30. The attached article provides additional details of the situation.

The Center for Education Reform is a non-profit, national advocacy group working to improve the nation's schools. If you have questions about this or other issues, please call 202-822-9000.