

THE Center for Education Reform



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PRESS ALERT

THEY'RE OFF! GOVERNORS RACE TO BE THE FIRST TO REFORM

"In the race to lead the states in meaningful school reform in 1995, Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson has pulled his state out in front," said Jeanne Allen, President of The Center for Education Reform. On Monday the Governor announced his plan to expand Milwaukee's much heralded school choice program for low-income children to include religious schools as an option.

The program currently is not at capacity because it is limited by the type of schools involved. Thompson said that "school choice will work best if there is true competition among education providers," which requires that more schools participate. Catholic and Muslim schools, for example, are plentiful in areas like Milwaukee, and attract children regardless of religious affiliation because of their solid academics and discipline for which they are known.

"Thompson is not alone in his view or his vigor for reform," said Allen. Tonight Michigan Governor John Engler plans in his State of the State address to call for a total revamping of the Michigan State Education Code. "The code is not unlike those in other states: a mire of rules and regulations -- many unrelated -- that all contribute to a burgeoning bureaucracy and interfere with teachers and principals trying to do their jobs," Allen said.

California's Pete Wilson announced similar reforms ten days ago in his State of the State address, including a "parental bill of rights" that would expand school choices available to parents and the elimination of California's 11 volumes of education code.

And Governors in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Ohio have vowed to champion charter schools and school choice pilot projects in the coming weeks.

But in Texas and New Jersey, the climate is more lukewarm. Governor George W. Bush Jr. plans to return control to local districts in Texas, but it is others who have picked up the real school reform banner for the state. And Governor Christine Todd Whitman has delayed for a year her school choice proposals, in an effort to bring more consensus to the issue.

"But these are not areas where traditional education interests wish to build consensus," Allen said. "Despite entrenched special interests and the faltering of a few could-be reform leaders, solid prospects for victory are moving forward."

The Center for Education Reform is a national non-profit clearinghouse for reforms, research and action in education. Jeanne Allen is President of the Washington, DC, based Center. For more information please call (202) 822-9000.