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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](http://www.edreform.com)*