



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

Newsire - Special Election Update Series - November 14, 2000

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Election Results 2000 from the Center for Education Reform

More Election Reflections:

UNIONS: The union factors heavily in the election of Hillary Rodham Clinton to U.S. Senate. United Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten boasted of her union's involvement in this all-eyes-on race last week, noting, "The union was very engaged in this race – more than most." The UFT made 120,000 pro-Clinton phone calls to members, sent out 300,000 pieces of literature and dispatched 3,000 volunteers on election night.

The UFT is the largest AFT affiliate, and is where both the late AFT president Al Shanker and current AFT president Sandy Feldman cut their teeth.

TESTING: Speaking of unions: the Massachusetts Teachers Union is on an all out assault against the state's accountability package, using \$600,000 in dues money to fund a TV campaign against the state's testing program, MCAS. Governor Paul Celucci derided the union for "giving up" on the state's children. State Board of Education Chairman James Peyser blasted the ads, noting, "If they (the teachers union) were investing this \$600,000 on developing effective remedial programs for high school students or middle school students in math, they'd be making a much greater contribution to education."

Nevertheless, last week, the state's local school board members voted to ask the state to suspend the requirement, despite a recently released Mass Insight poll showing strong support for using MCAS as a graduation requirement. The motion was not without significant opposition, however. And the best argument to support the test came from the nine-year-old daughter of Middleborough school board member John McDonald, who was told a lot of people don't want the test and responded, "Why, didn't they study?"

CHARTER SCHOOLS: The jury is still out on [Washington state](#), where 400,000 absentee ballots on the state's charter school initiative have yet to be counted. Our analysis of the vote so far shows much greater support in the more densely populated areas of the state; less support in the rural areas.

UPDATE: After the final ballot tally, the Washington Charter School Ballot Initiative was defeated.

In other cities and other states, public sentiment on charters is very clear. A new poll in Vista,

California, found 79% of voters surveyed supported using charter schools to solve the district's severe overcrowding problem.

The "Five Year Charter School Study" by the Center for Market Based Education of the Goldwater Institute looks at "mature" charter schools – those up and running for 5 years. Examining eight areas (including curriculum, student achievement and finance/reporting), the study finds that Arizona's mature charters offer parents choices, innovation and the ability to quickly respond to student needs – yet another repudiation of the recent NSBA report vilifying charter schools. The Goldwater Institute report can be found at <http://www.cmbe.org>. CER's analysis of more than 50 charter studies found that the vast majority show positive results from charters.

THE LONG HAUL: Some editorial writers are declaring the movement for school choice dead based on two ballot defeats in Michigan and California. As reported last week, those efforts failed to win even close to a majority, but as Bill Ballenger, of Inside Michigan Politics newsletter noted, "Every time there's a ballot proposal and there's a lot of confusion, people are going to vote no." Which is why, in the end, education reform will best be advanced in legislative battles.

The results from the elections – on choice and charters – have emboldened advocates of the status quo to say "Give up." We hear that at a National Press Club speech, NEA president Bob Chase muttered that he wished the reformers would "just go away." (For CER President Jeanne Allen's response, see [SCHOOL CHOICE IS HERE TO STAY; PUBLIC TRIES IT, LIKES IT.](#))

But we're reminded of the late Rep. Bella Abzug, who once noted that in order for women to get the vote, it took 56 state referenda, 480 legislative campaigns, 47 constitutional convention campaigns, 19 attempts to get a plank in party platforms, and 19 attempts in 19 successive Congresses before an amendment passed -- which then required a ratification campaign and approval by 2/3rds of the states.

At what point should they have given up?

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See also [CER Newswire November 9, 2000: Special Election Update #2](#)

See also [CER Newswire November 8, 2000: Special Election Update #1](#)



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