

Public Isn't Clamoring For School Vouchers

Americans are not clamoring for school vouchers: Most registered voters oppose the idea, and even parents of school-age children only divide evenly on it. If the use of vouchers would cut public school funding, moreover, what support does exist drops sharply.

Among all registered voters, 40 percent in an ABC News/Washington Post poll support vouchers – "having the government give parents money to help pay for their children to attend a private or religious school." Fifty-five percent are opposed.

Four in 10 of those supporters peel away when asked if they'd support vouchers "even if it meant less money for the public schools," as critics charge. Given that outcome, support for vouchers falls to 23 percent and opposition rises to 70 percent.

Parents of school-age children divide 47-47 percent on the question of vouchers. Again, though, if it meant cutting public school funding, that shifts to 66 percent opposed, 27 percent in favor.

	School vouchers:		If it means cutting public school finding	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
All reg. voters	40%	55	23%	70
Those with schoolkids	47	47	27	66

NO SURPRISE – Parental concern about public school funding shouldn't be a surprise, since 77 percent of parents in this survey have their child or children exclusively in public schools. Presumably those parents wouldn't appreciate a school funding cut.

Indeed most public school parents aren't looking for a change: Even if vouchers worth \$3,500 in tuition assistance were available to them, 69 percent say they'd likely keep their child in public school rather than move to a private or religious institution.

Vouchers have been a prominent election issue this year. They're on the ballot in state initiatives in California and Michigan, and Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush favors vouchers for children in underperforming schools.

GROUPS – Views on vouchers vary most according to political predispositions. Democrats oppose them by 69-26 percent and independents oppose them by 56-40 percent; Republicans favor vouchers, by a closer 53-43 percent.

Apart from Republicans, only young adults lend majority support to vouchers, 53-44 percent. And conservatives divide 48-46 percent on the issue. If it meant cutting public school funding, though, all three of these groups move into opposition.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 6-9, 2000 among a random national sample of 965 registered voters. The results have a three-point error margin. Field work by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

Here are the full results (* is less than 0.5 percent.):

14. On another subject, would you support or oppose having the government give parents money to help pay for their children to attend a private or religious school instead of their local public school?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
Registered Voters:			
10/9/00	40	55	5

15. (ASKED IF SUPPORT IN Q.14) Would you support or oppose that if it meant less money for the public schools?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
Registered Voters:			
10/9/00	58	39	3

17. (ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAVE SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN HOUSEHOLD) Are they attending a public school or a private or religious school?

	Public school	Private/religious school	Some in each (vol)	No opinion
Registered Voters:				
10/9/00	77	18	5	1

18. (ASKED IF CHILD IN PUBLIC SCHOOL) If you could get thirty-five hundred dollars from the government in tuition assistance to send your child to a private or religious school, what would you be most likely to do - keep your child in his or her current school, or move your child to a private or religious school?

	Keep in current	Move to private/religious school	Both (vol)	No opinion
Registered Voters				
10/9/00	69	25	1	5

END