



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

TESTIMONY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS SB 3 TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2017

I am Barbara Frandsen testifying on behalf of the League of Women Voters in Texas in opposition to SB 3. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to share the position of the League of Women Voters of Texas.

Like all other League positions, our view is derived through a lengthy and thoughtful process involving the participation of 25 local Leagues representing more than 5,000 members and supporters throughout the state.

Whether called vouchers, tax credits, scholarships, or grants, any program using taxpayer money to fund private and religious schools takes money away from public education. Regardless of denial and careful wording used by proponents, the purpose of vouchers remains focused on removing students and funding from the public domain. It is a myth that when a child leaves public education, the school saves money. In fact, the school loses money while all costs for the teachers, building maintenance, utilities, and materials continue as before. It is also a myth that voucher students show improved academic performance over public school students.

Studies do not demonstrate benefits for children living in poverty. According to Dr. Charles Luke, of the Texas Coalition for Public Schools, vouchers will not cover the cost of tuition for most private or parochial schools. Along with inadequate funding, lack of bus service means that lower income children will not be able to attend the schools promised by those in favor of vouchers. Approximately 90% will remain in public education.

We are concerned that private and religious schools do not have to follow state curriculum or meet accountability requirements that are required of public educators. In addition they do not have to offer the state mandated protections for teachers that are employed by our public schools. Our public schools must provide

- State exams,
- ESL classes,
- Special education services,
- Free transportation.

In reality, vouchers may heighten segregation based on race, language, income, and disabilities. Although we support choice within the public school system, we will not support stripping funds from our constitutionally-mandated public system. Free public education has always been, and will always remain, the bedrock of democracy.

Every dollar removed from public education leaves our already strained public system even weaker. We oppose vouchers because they will ultimately deny much needed funds to our public schools. Make no mistake. Whether intentional or not, the outcomes of vouchers will be destruction of public education. Vouchers begin the ending.

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The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) is a nonpartisan citizens' organization that has fought since 1919 to improve our government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. It represents more than 5,000 members and supporters throughout Texas.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties. The member-driven organization of women and men encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and seeks to influence public policy through education and advocacy of positions based on extensive issue study and consensus.