

PRESS RELEASE



State Representative Rachel Storch District 64



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Rep. Storch Gives Governor Matt Blunt's 65% Education Plan an "F."

Representative Rachel Storch (D-St. Louis City) spoke out today against Governor Blunt's proposal to mandate spending requirements for school budgets.

Blunt has endorsed a ballot initiative proposal that would impose limitations on school spending, requiring that 65% of all school funds be spent on certain categories of expenses.

"I was concerned from the minute I heard about Governor Blunt's proposal because this plan strips away local control from our school districts," said Storch. "Our educators need freedom to make the decisions that are right for their respective school districts – Missouri is a diverse state, and our districts have different needs. Furthermore, it is outrageous to tell schools when they can and cannot spend funds to buy books for libraries or to transport children to school."

"This plan is not the right fit for Missouri. So, I was not surprised when I learned that Blunt's plan came out of the playbook from a Washington, D.C. group called 'First Class Education,' which is supported by proponents of vouchers," said Storch. "This plan is about politics, not about Missouri schools," Storch commented. "I am not aware of a single Missouri educator or education group that has endorsed this plan."

"My concern was heightened yesterday when I saw the letter from 'First Class Education' – the national Republican front group that is pushing the 65% plan," Storch said. "The FCE letter makes clear that the plan is simply a Republican scheme to move states toward vouchers, and to use children as pawns in a political game of chess. This is the worst kind of politics."

The FCE memo explicitly states that political "advantages" of the 65% plan include:

- creating divisions within the education community:

"The 1st Class Education Proposal naturally pits administrators and teachers at odds with one another." (p. 3);

- circumventing campaign finance laws:

"[The plan] allows the use of unlimited non-personal money for political positioning advantages. The aforementioned benefits can be achieved with funding in any amount and from any source."

It has also become clear that there are strong ties between the founder of FCE and All Children Matter, a pro-voucher PAC, which contributed nearly \$200,000 to Governor Blunt's campaign. Patrick Byrne, the founder of FCE, joined All Children Matter in funding more than 86% of an anti-public school ballot initiative in Utah last year.

It should also be noted that Standard & Poor's released a report yesterday that shows there is no correlation between Governor Blunt's 65% plan and improved test scores. (See attachment.)

"Many Republican legislators have already disavowed the 65% plan. I hope that Governor Blunt will step back from this political maneuver, and take some time to listen to Missouri educators about the right direction for our schools. By working together, I am confident that we will find the best approach to increase resources in the classroom," said Storch.

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New Report Says Goal of Proposal Laudable;
Finds No Link Between Classroom Spending Target and Higher Test Scores

NEW YORK--As states consider a proposal to require school districts to spend at least 65 cents of every dollar on classroom instruction, a new analysis by Standard & Poor's has found a lack of empirical evidence linking higher student achievement with higher proportional spending levels. The report suggests that the specific ways that schools use their instructional dollars may have as much, if not more, to do with student achievement as the percentage of dollars spent on the classroom.

Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services has not taken a position on the 65 Percent Solution, a measure promoted by Washington, D.C.-based First Class Education. Rather, Standard & Poor's said it conducted its analysis to better inform ongoing policy discussions about the topic.

The 65 Percent Solution--which has been proposed or is expected to be proposed in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Texas and Washington--seeks to have all states require their school districts to spend at least that much of their "operating budgets" on "classroom instruction," as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics.

"Governors, legislators, superintendents, and school boards all across the country are seeking ways to minimize inefficiencies and optimize the effectiveness of each dollar spent in their schools," said Thomas Sheridan, vice president of Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services. "Leveraging data and analysis to identify and replicate the specific classroom practices that are producing the best results will be a key to achieving that goal."

While increasing classroom resources may be considered a laudable goal, Standard & Poor's concluded that "no minimum spending allocation is a 'silver bullet' solution for raising student achievement." Analyzing data in nine of the 10 states that are currently considering the 65 Percent Solution, **Standard & Poor's found no significant positive correlation between the percentage of funds that districts spend on instruction, and the percentage of students who score proficient or higher** on state reading and math tests. (Sufficient data were not available to conduct the analysis in Illinois.)

Of the nine states where the 65 Percent Solution is being considered and which had sufficient data to analyze, Minnesota had the greatest percentage of districts that already allocate at least 65 percent of their operating budgets to instruction. In that state, Standard & Poor's noticed a wide range of performance in the districts that met the 65 percent threshold; no significant positive correlation was found between spending 65 percent of a district's operating budget on instruction, and academic proficiency rates. In fact,

Standard & Poor's found no significant correlation between spending any minimum percentage of a district's budget on instruction and state reading and math proficiency rates.

This is not to say funding does not matter, or that school districts should not dedicate optimal resources to the classroom, the report notes. The report explains that measuring how much of a district's budget is dedicated to instruction is valuable in assessing whether a district's spending priorities are aligned with its academic goals. It goes on to offer an example of a formula for calculating how much of a district's budget is targeted toward instruction, but cautions that policymakers should be aware that "the percentage allocated to instruction may need to vary from one district to another for legitimate reasons."

To read Standard & Poor's report, visit

<http://recp.rm05.net/ctt?kn=2&m=130814&r=MTEwNTY1NzQ1OAS2&b=2&j=NTAzTYzODkS1&mt=1>.