



# Obama's Failing Report Card

## *On School Choice, Obama's Education Record Fails To Make The Grade*

### OBAMA'S JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TRIED TO BLOCK LOUISIANA'S SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM

**In August Of 2013, Obama's Justice Department Filed Suit To Block Louisiana From Awarding Vouchers To Students In At Least 22 Districts Without A Court Order.** "The Justice Department said Louisiana has given vouchers this school year to students in at least 22 districts remaining under desegregation orders. It's asking the court, starting with the 2014-15 school year, to permanently block the state from awarding vouchers in districts that are under desegregation orders, unless those districts seek court approval. Louisiana lawmakers approved a voucher program in 2008 for low-income New Orleans students who were in failing schools. The Louisiana Scholarship Program was later expanded statewide. It allows children in school districts graded C, D or F to receive public money to attend private schools." ("Justice Dept. Tries To Stop La. School Vouchers," [The Associated Press](#), 8/25/13)

- ***The Washington Post, On The Justice Department's Actions: "A Misguided Suit That Would Block These Disadvantaged Students From Getting The Better Educational Opportunities They Are Due."*** "Nine of 10 Louisiana children who receive vouchers to attend private schools are black. All are poor and, if not for the state assistance, would be consigned to low-performing or failing schools with little chance of learning the skills they will need to succeed as adults. So it's bewildering, if not downright perverse, for the Obama administration to use the banner of civil rights to bring a misguided suit that would block these disadvantaged students from getting the better educational opportunities they are due." (Editorial, "Justice Department Bids To Trap Poor, Black Children In Ineffective Schools," [The Washington Post](#), 9/1/13)

**In April 2014, The Justice Department Won A Court Ruling That Requires The Louisiana Voucher Program To Provide DOJ Information On The Racial Background Of Students Participating In The Program.** "Starting this fall, Louisiana must provide the agency with timely information about the racial background of participating students each year so the Justice Department can monitor the program's effect on school segregation, a federal judge ruled Tuesday night." (Stephanie Simon, "Court: Louisiana Must Report Voucher Data," [Politico](#), 4/8/14)

- ***The Department Of Justice Could Use The Racial Background Information "To Challenge Some Voucher Awards."*** "The department could use that information to try to challenge some voucher awards." (Stephanie Simon, "Court: Louisiana Must Report Voucher Data," [Politico](#), 4/8/14)

## ***Obama's DOJ Targeted Schools That Largely Serve Minority And Disadvantaged Families***

**Approximately 86 Percent Of The Students In Louisiana's Voucher Program Came From Schools That Were Rated D Or F.** "The number that should matter to federal officials is this: Roughly 86 percent of students in the voucher program came from schools that were rated D or F. Mr. White called ironic using rules to fight racism to keep students in failing schools; we think it appalling." (Editorial, "Justice Department Bids To Trap Poor, Black Children In Ineffective Schools," [The Washington Post](#), 9/1/13)

- **"Under Louisiana's Voucher Law, Only Students From Families With Incomes Below 250% Of The Poverty Line And Who Attend Schools With A C Grade Or Below Are Eligible For Vouchers."** (Editorial, "Louisiana Voucher Assault, Round 2," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 12/1/13)

**"Ninety-One Percent Of Louisiana Scholarship Students Are Minority And All Come From Low-Income Families Assigned To Poor Or Failing Schools In Their Districts."** (Casey Ferrand, "School Choice Program 'Excelling,' Parents And Advocates Say," [WDSU](#), 4/22/14)

- **Louisiana's Scholarship Program "Enables Predominantly Black Families To Select The Best Schools For Their Children."** "More absurdly, the desegregation decrees of the past focused on state action that discriminated against blacks: the Louisiana Scholarship enables predominantly black families to select the best schools for their children." (Clint Bolick, Op-Ed, "Will Minority 'Children Be Barred From Southern Schoolhouses Again?," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 2/28/14)
- **"Close To 92 Percent Of Louisiana Parents Said They Are Happy With Their Child's School And Academic Progress, While 98 Percent Said Their Children Feel Safe And Welcome At Their Scholarship School."** (Casey Ferrand, "School Choice Program 'Excelling,' Parents And Advocates Say," [WDSU](#), 4/22/14)

## **AFTER MOVING INTO THE WHITE HOUSE, OBAMA REPEATEDLY TRIED TO END SCHOOL CHOICE IN D.C.**

**In 2009, Obama Urged The Democrat-Controlled Congress To End The Voucher Program.** "At the Obama administration's urging, Congress agreed in 2009 to phase out the program. But it was revived last year as part of a budget deal with House Republicans." ("Obama Budget Proposal Includes No New Funding For DC Private-School Vouchers," [The Associated Press](#), 2/14/12)

- ***The Washington Post*: Obama Proposed Not Allowing New Students Into The D.C. Voucher Program "And Letting The Program Die By Attrition."** "Mr. Obama has proposed letting the 1,700 students now in the program continue their schooling while admitting no new students and letting the program die by attrition." (Editorial, "Vouching For Vouchers," [The Washington Post](#), 5/14/09)

**In 2011, A White House Statement On The Program Stated: "The Administration Strongly Opposes Expanding The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program And Opening It To New Students."** "The Administration Strongly Opposes Expanding The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program And Opening It To New Students." (Executive Office Of The President--Office Of Management And Budget, ["Statement Of Administration Policy, H.R. 471—Scholarships For Opportunity And Results Act."](#) 3/29/11)

**The Obama Administration Was Accused Of Trying To "Limit The Size And Scope" Of The D.C. Scholarship Program.** "They complain that the Obama administration is trying to "limit the size and scope" of the program, and ask for a wide variety of letters and e-mails related to the way the program has been run." (Ben Pershing, "Boehner, Lieberman Ask Obama To Fund D.C. Scholarship Program," [The Washington Post](#), 3/22/12)

**Obama's FY 2013 Budget "[Requested] Zero Funding For The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program" Despite "A Majority Of D.C. Residents Favor[ing] It."** "Mr. Obama's fiscal 2013 budget

requests zero funding for the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which allows children from low-income D.C. families to attend private schools with federal vouchers of up to \$12,000 annually. It has proved popular and successful. More than 10,000 families have sought to participate since the program's start in 2004, and polls show a majority of D.C. residents favor it." (Editorial, "Who Will Rescue The D.C. Voucher Program This Time?" [The Washington Post](#), 4/10/12)

- ***The Washington Post: Obama's Decision Not To Fund The Program In His Budget Was In "Direct Contradiction To A Law He Signed Last Year."*** "As Mr. Boehner wrote on a blog Tuesday, it was President Obama who 'inexplicably' zeroed out funding for the program in his budget proposal, a decision in direct contradiction to a law he signed last year that authorized full funding for vouchers, along with monies for D.C. charter and traditional public schools. That legislation contains no cap on enrollment." (Editorial, "D.C. Children Left In The Lurch," [The Washington Post](#), 5/22/12)

**The Obama Administration Has Thrown Up Administrative Roadblocks To Hold Down Enrollment In The Program.** "The drop in participants is a natural outgrowth of two unforgiving scheduling decisions. First, the Education Department prevented the program's administrator from accepting applications after an arbitrary date of March 31 of this year, shutting out anyone who came forward after that cutoff. Then, scholarship lotteries for the 2012-13 school year weren't allowed to take place until July, far later than many parents could wait to make decisions about where their kids would attend school in the fall. Nobody at the department can give straight answers as to why. In practical terms, what this means is that only 319 new students were offered scholarships, despite demand for many more." (Kevin P. Chavous, Op-ed, "A Second-Term Agenda For Obama: Stop Messing With School Vouchers In D.C.," [The Washington Post](#), 11/9/12)

### ***Obama's Attempts To End D.C.'s School Choice Program Would Have Largely Impacted Minority And Disadvantaged Children***

**The D.C Opportunity Scholarship Program Allows Low-Income District Of Columbia Children To Attend Private Schools.** "House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) and Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) announced Monday that the Education Department has agreed to fully implement the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which allows children from low-income District families to use federal vouchers of up to \$12,000 annually to attend private schools." (Editorial, "A Deal On School Vouchers That Helps D.C. Families," [The Washington Post](#), 6/20/12)

**The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program Serves Low-Income Students, "Nearly All Of Whom Are A Minority."** "And, to further undermine the argument made by the Rothmans -- the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program is only available for low-income students, nearly all of whom are a minority." (Kevin P. Chavous, "The Education Revolution: Breaking The Status Quo," [Huffington Post](#), 2/4/14)

**African American And Hispanic Leaders Were Critical Of Obama's Efforts To Defund The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, "A Highly Successful School Voucher Initiative Serving Low-Income Children In The District Of Columbia."** "African American and Hispanic leaders tonight sharply criticized the Obama Administration's official announcement opposing the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, a highly successful school voucher initiative serving low-income children in the District of Columbia." (Black Alliance For Educational Options and Hispanic Council For Reform And Educational Options, "Black And Hispanic Leaders Blast President Obama's Opposition To D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program," [Press Release](#), 3/29/11)

**According To One Study, Ninety-Eight Percent Of Children Participating In D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program Are African-American And Hispanic.** "Ninety-eight percent of participating children are African-American and Hispanic, and more than 92 percent of families are satisfied with the program." ("Obama Budget Says 'No' To D.C.'s Low-Income Families," [American Federation For Children](#), 3/4/14)

## ***Children In D.C.'s Voucher Program Have Seen Better Performance, Higher Graduation Rates, And More Satisfaction Than Peers At Public Schools***

**Students Who Received Scholarships Under The D.C. Scholarship Opportunity Program “Had A 91 Percent Graduation Rate—21 Percentage Points Higher Than Their Peers Who Did Not Receive A Voucher.”** “According to the Department of Education’s scientifically rigorous evaluation of the program, the DCOSP has been a wild success: Students who received a voucher and used it to attend a private school had a 91 percent graduation rate—21 percentage points higher than their peers who did not receive a voucher.” (Lindsey Burke, “Obama Budget Ends Funding For D.C. School Choice Program,” [The Heritage Foundation's The Foundry Blog](#), 4/12/13)

- **“The Impact Of Actually Using A Voucher Was To Increase The Graduation Rate From 70 Percent To 91 Percent (Wolf et al. 2010).”** (Patrick J. Wolf and Michael McShane, “Is The Juice Worth The Squeeze? A Benefit/Cost Analysis Of The District Of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program,” [Education, Finance, And Policy](#), Winter 2013)

**The Washington Post: The Program Is “Enormously Popular With D.C. Residents,” Boosts Graduation Rates, And Doesn’t Drain Resources.** “It has proved to be enormously popular with D.C. residents, with demand far outstripping the number of vouchers. Moreover, studies have shown its success in boosting graduation rates of its participants, and contrary to the fiction of its critics, it doesn’t drain resources from public education. Giving parents a choice and improving public schools are not mutually exclusive.” (Editorial, “A Deal On School Vouchers That Helps D.C. Families,” [The Washington Post](#), 6/20/12)

- **The Washington Post: The DC Voucher Program “Not Only Works — In The Judgment Of Federal Evaluators — But Also Enjoys Bipartisan Support.”** “Surely, it shouldn’t be among the president’s priorities to single out for attack a tiny federal program that not only works — in the judgment of federal evaluators — but also enjoys bipartisan support. If it is, we trust that Mr. Boehner would step in, as he did last year, to save a program that D.C.’s poorest families value for their children.” (Editorial, “Who Will Rescue The D.C. Voucher Program This Time?” [The Washington Post](#), 4/10/12)

**Researchers Found That For Every Dollar Spent On D.C.’s School Choice Program, \$2.62 In Benefits Were Achieved.** “We Find A Benefit To Cost Ratio Of 2.62, Or \$2.62 In Benefits For Every Dollar Spent On The Program.” (Patrick J. Wolf and Michael McShane, “Is The Juice Worth The Squeeze? A Benefit/Cost Analysis Of The District Of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program,” [Education, Finance, And Policy](#), Winter 2013)

- **DC Opportunity Scholarship Program Generated Impacts Forecasted To Pay A Net Return Of 262%.** “The five-year pilot of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program generated impacts on student educational attainment that are forecasted to pay a net return of 262 percent over the course of the lives of the low-income DC students who participated.” (Patrick J. Wolf and Michael McShane, “Is The Juice Worth The Squeeze? A Benefit/Cost Analysis Of The District Of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program,” [Education, Finance, And Policy](#), Winter 2013)

## **EVEN BEFORE BECOMING PRESIDENT, OBAMA OPPOSED THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOL CHOICE**

**As A Senate Candidate In 2004, Obama Opposed School Vouchers.** “Obama defended his opposition to school vouchers, saying they would drain funds from public education.” (Christopher Wills, “Gay Rights Produces Further Conflict In Their Senate Debate,” [The Associated Press](#), 10/27/04)

- **“Obama Opposes Vouchers, Arguing They Would Drain Too Much Money From Public Schools That Educate The Majority Of Students.”** (Eric Krol, “Jack Ryan Has Uphill Battle For Black Voters,” [Chicago Daily Herald](#), 3/22/04)



**When Speaking At An NEA Meeting, Obama “Condemned Voucher Programs.”** “[Sen. Obama] condemned voucher programs, to the delight of the assembled.” (Elmer Smith, Op-Ed, “In A Time Of Change, He Could Go All The Way,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, 7/6/07)

**In 2008, The Obama Campaign “Repeated His Longstanding Opposition To Vouchers.”** “According to the campaign, Obama ‘repeated his longstanding opposition to vouchers.’ Not quite. What Obama did was give a six-minute, thoughtful response indicating he was a skeptic of vouchers, but that he might change his mind if there was research to back it up.” (Michele McNeil, “Obama’s Damage Control On Vouchers,” [Education Week’s Campaign K-12](#), 2/20/08)

**In A 2008 Discussion Of School Vouchers, Then-Senator Obama Said The D.C. School System Is “In Terrible Shape.”** “In arguing the merits of charters vs. vouchers, the candidates mentioned the dysfunctional state of the D.C. school system. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), who opposes vouchers and supports charters, said the system ‘is in terrible shape, and it has been for a very long time. We’ve got a wonderful new superintendent there who’s working very hard with the young mayor there.’” (Bill Turque, “Candidates Touch On D.C. Schools,” *The Washington Post*, 10/16/08)

- **“During The Just-Concluded Campaign, Mr. Obama Spoke Dismissively Of The Federally Funded Voucher Program That Gives Poor D.C. Families Access To The Kind Of Educational Opportunities His Family Is Fortunate To Have.”** (Editorial, “School Choice,” *The Washington Post*, 11/15/08)

## **OBAMA’S SCHOOL CHOICE RECORD MAY HAVE MORE TO DO WITH HIS POLITICAL ALLIES THAN THE INTERESTS OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN**

**Between 2008-2014, Teachers Unions Contributed \$17.2 Million To Democrats, Representing 96 Percent Of Their Total Political Contributions.** ([Center For Responsive Politics](#), Accessed 5/14/14)

- **During The 2008 Election Cycle, Obama Received \$118,436 From Teachers Unions.** ([Center For Responsive Politics](#), Accessed, 9/3/13)
- **During The 2012 Election Cycle, Obama Received \$82,990 From Teachers Unions.** ([Center For Responsive Politics](#), Accessed, 9/3/13)

### ***In Louisiana And D.C., Obama’s Actions Were “Exactly What The Teachers Unions Want”***

***The Washington Post: Killing The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Is Exactly What The Teachers Unions Want.*** “The Obama administration closed the program to new students; children currently enrolled, while supposedly assured of getting vouchers until they graduate from high school, face uncertainty as the program’s administrator pulls out. This is exactly what the program’s chief antagonists, the teachers unions, want; the National Education Association lobbied fiercely against Mr. Lieberman’s amendment.” (Editorial, “Congress Must Act Soon To Reauthorize D.C. Scholarship Program,” [The Washington Post](#), 3/10/10)

**Louisiana Teachers Unions Sued The State To Stop The Voucher Program.** “As expected, Louisiana’s largest teachers association, some of its local chapters, and four individual public school teachers have filed two state lawsuits challenging the primary portions of the sweeping education overhaul that Gov. Bobby Jindal signed in April. The Louisiana Federation of Teachers argues on several fronts that the courts should strike down tenure and other personnel changes, along with a statewide program that will use the public school-financing formula to finance private school tuition grants.” (Bill Barrow, “Teachers File State Lawsuits Challenging Gov. Jindal’s Voucher, Tenure Laws,” [The Times-Picayune](#), 6/7/12)