



Office of Congressman Jeff Flake

News Release

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CONTACT: Matthew Specht (202) 225-2635

Congressman Flake to Introduce D.C. School Choice Bill

Bush Budget Includes Funding for D.C. School Choice

Mesa, Arizona - Congressman Jeff Flake, who represents the state's Sixth District, today announced that he will introduce legislation to create opportunity scholarships for low-income children currently enrolled in the Washington, D.C. public school system to attend a public or private school of their choice.

"I firmly believe that education is an issue for state and local government, but Washington, D.C. is a special circumstance where the federal government does have jurisdiction over local education issues. The federal government has a responsibility to see to it that the children of D.C. have access to a good education, and for too many that's not the case right now," said Flake.

"There will inevitably be political leaders in Washington, D.C. who say that parents, not members of Congress, should decide where to send their children to school. They are absolutely right. Congress is simply giving parents in the District of Columbia more options."

"Parents of children enrolled in the D.C. public school system ought to have the right and the means to send their kids where they have an opportunity to succeed, and this legislation will give that to them."

"The teacher's unions' argument against these opportunity scholarships in the past has been that it will drain money from the public school system. However, this legislation authorizes new money and doesn't touch existing funds from the D.C. public school system."

The budget that President Bush has submitted to Congress includes funding for a school choice program in Washington, D.C.

“Clearly, President Bush feels strongly about this issue, and I’m quite confident that we can make D.C. school choice a reality.”

Congress passed nearly identical legislation in 1997, but it was vetoed by then-President Clinton. Former House Majority Leader Dick Armey of Texas introduced the bill and has been its principal champion. Mr. Armey retired at the end of the 107th Congress and has passed the baton to Congressman Flake on this issue. **“There can be no more heartwarming venture than obtaining a better education for a child and Congressman Flake is just the man for the job,”** said Armey.

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