

June 15, 2009

Dennis Van Roekel, President
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-3290

Dear Mr. Van Roekel:

I am writing regarding a letter I received on June 11, 2009 from the National Education Association (NEA) signed by Diane Shust and Randall Moody.

I believe the NEA letter misrepresents important facts. The purpose of the NEA letter was to express NEA's opposition to a proposal to provide private school vouchers for military families. I am not stating any position on that particular proposal. However, in making NEA's case in opposition to that proposal, your letter states:

Proponents of a military family voucher program have cited the District of Columbia voucher program as a model. However, the DC voucher pilot program, which is set to expire this year, has been a failure. In fact, over its five year span, the pilot program has yielded no evidence of positive impact on student achievement.

I respectfully point out that the statement that the District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) has "yielded no evidence of positive impact on student achievement" is inaccurate.

As you know, when Congress authorized the OSP, the law required that an independent entity evaluate the program, and further directed that such evaluation be "conducted using the strongest possible research design for determining the effectiveness of the program." The results of that congressionally mandated study were released earlier this year by the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) based on three years of data. That study found that the OSP had a statistically significant positive impact on reading test scores.

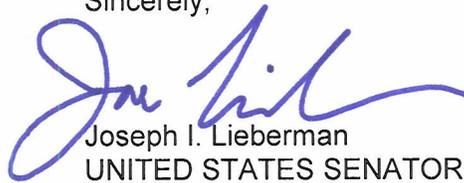
According to testimony provided by Dr. Patrick Wolf, the principle investigator for IES, to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which I chair and which has jurisdiction over the District, this voucher program "has met a tough standard for efficacy in serving low-income inner-city students." Dr. Wolf further explained that most programs evaluated using similar rigorous methods fail to show any statistically significant improvement. According to Dr. Wolf:

"The National Center for Educational Evaluation (NCEE) at the Institute of Education Sciences has released the results of 11 studies that, like this one, employ the methodological rigor of random assignment to treatment and control groups. The DC OSP evaluation is one of only three of these 11 NCEE studies to report overall statistically significant positive achievement impacts in either reading or math."

Notwithstanding our differences on this issue, I know we share a commitment to improving all public schools across the Nation. Like you, I believe that every classroom should have an effective teacher and that we must implement a compensation system that attracts and retains the best teachers. And I agree with the premise that vouchers are not the sole solution to our public school woes. But I do believe that they can play a role in our effort to ensure that students enrolled in troubled public schools have the best possible education. The D.C. voucher program has shown positive and statistically significant results in academic achievement, and it does not divert any funds from public schools.

I look forward to working with you in our efforts to improve our educational system and ensure that all children receive a high quality education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Lieberman", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

Joseph I. Lieberman
UNITED STATES SENATOR