

PSBA's Public Opinion Poll on Taxpayer-Funded Tuition Vouchers

Lesson # 1: Vouchers Unpopular in 2011

65% of Pennsylvanians oppose giving taxpayer dollars to parents so they can send their children to a private school of their own choosing, 43% strongly oppose compared to only 11% who strongly favor.ⁱ

- **Every region across the state indicates it opposes** giving taxpayer monies to students to attend a private school. In fact, 77% of respondents living in Northeastern Pennsylvania, more so than any other region in the Commonwealth, oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers and a majority (51%) strongly opposed them. Philadelphia and the southeastern region, was the second highest region voicing opposition to taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers (66%); followed by the northwest region (63%); Allegheny County and the Southwestern area of the state (62%); and Central Pennsylvania (61%).
- **Republicans and Democrats alike oppose giving** taxpayer-funded tuition dollars to students to attend a private school of their choice, 68% to 67%, respectively; compared to less than 13% of Republicans strongly favoring taxpayer-funded tuition for private school enrollment (13% compared to 9% of Democrats). Republicans' strong opposition (45%) to using public monies for private school tuition is 3 times greater than those Republicans strongly favoring that policy option (13%).
- **Regardless of household income, Pennsylvanians oppose** public dollars being used for student tuition to private schools. Those respondents with household incomes less than \$50,000 reported approximately the same opposition (64%) to taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers for private school attendance compared to 67% of households with more than \$50,000 in income. Those with household incomes greater than \$50,000 report four times as much strong opposition to public monies being used to support private school tuition (45%) than those strongly supporting this public policy (10%).
- **Pennsylvanians' educational status does not change their opinion – they oppose** taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers for students choosing a private school (62% of those with a college degree; 65% with a high school degree or less; and 68% with some college).
- **Pennsylvanians, regardless of age, oppose giving** public monies to students to attend private schools of their choice. In fact, Pennsylvanians aged 55 and over, more than any other age group, oppose public monies being given for private school tuition -- seventy-one percent (71%) of this age respondents oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers with 51% strongly opposing taxpayer-

funded tuition vouchers. Sixty-five percent (65%) of those aged 35 to 54 years of age, and 59% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years of age also oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers.

- **Pennsylvanians with and without children overwhelming oppose** taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers, respondents having no children in the home oppose by 67%, those Pennsylvanians with no public school children oppose by 64% and those individuals with public school children by 60%.
- **Gender does not alter the poll results -- both men and women oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers**, but men more so than women, 69% and 61%, respectively, oppose giving public monies to students to attend a private school. Five times as many men (48%) strongly oppose taxpayer funded tuition vouchers compared to those men who strongly favor (7%) public dollars being used to fund private school tuition for students.
- **Both whites and nonwhites** oppose using public monies for students to attend a private school of their choice 67% compared to 53%; and only a small group of respondents strongly favor taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers (10% whites and 14% nonwhites). Among nonwhites, strong opposition to public monies being used by students to attend a private school of their choice is more than double (31%) compared to those who strongly support (14%).

Lesson # 2: Vouchers REMAIN Unpopular: Comparison between Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 Opinion Polls

- **School voucher proponents failed to convince Pennsylvanians** that their public taxpayer dollars should be used to fund students' tuition to private schools. Sixty-six percent (66%) of Pennsylvanians in 2010 compared to 65% in 2011 oppose this public policy initiative.
 - 13.7% of Pennsylvanians in 2010 strongly favored public taxpayer dollars supporting private tuition for students compared to 10.6% in 2011 – a slight drop of 3%.
- **Older Pennsylvanians (55 years and older) solidified their opposition** to vouchers even more over the past year. In 2010, 65% of this age group opposed state tax monies used for students to attend a private school of their choice and in 2011, 71% of this group oppose – a 7% increase.
- **The number of Republicans saying they oppose public monies being used to support student choice of a private school grew** by 10 percentage points from 58% in 2010 to 68% in 2011. While those Republicans saying they favored publicly funded tuition for private school tuition fell an almost equal amount from 40% in 2010 to 31% in 2011.
 - Republicans strongly favoring public dollars being used to allow students to attend a private school of their choice declined from 2010 to 2011 by 5% (18% to 13%); while the number of Republicans indicating that they strongly oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers for private education grew 4% compared to the 2010 fall poll results from 41% to 45%.

¹ The following summary presents the findings of a survey of 801 Pennsylvania adults conducted during September, 2011. The survey was designed by Terry Madonna Opinion Research and the interviewing was conducted by First Contact of Rehoboth, Delaware. The sample error for the total sample is plus or minus 3.5 percent. Telephone numbers for the survey were generated via random digit dialing. Respondents were randomly selected from within each household. The final sample was weighted (age, education, race, region, and gender) to correct for differential probabilities of selection and non-response using an iterative weighting procedure.