

Why Public Funding for Private and Christian Schools Could Soon Become Reality

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What once may have been seen as an unattainable goal for those fed up with public school curriculum might become a reality in the near future.

Texas Republicans, bankrolled by prominent Christian conservative donors, are looking to appease angry parents opposed to such issues like critical race theory and the teaching of sexuality in schools. Funded in large part by Defend Texas Liberty, these donors have given millions of dollars to Republican candidates in Texas who hope to win key races in today's midterm elections.

Media reports say that Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has pledged to make school choice a priority in the next legislative session, provided he defeats Democratic challenger Beto O'Rourke on Tuesday.

For months, Abbott has voiced support for a school voucher plan that would effectively allow parents to use taxpayer dollars to send their kids to nonpublic schools.

"We can fully fund public schools while also giving parents a choice about which school is right for their child," Abbott said recently during a campaign event in San Antonio. "Empowering parents means giving them the choice to send their children to any public school, charter school or private school with state funding following the student."

Defend Texas Liberty has been described by liberal media sources as a "Christian nationalist-aligned political action

committee" led by former Texas state lawmaker Jonathan Strickland. It is reportedly bankrolled by two West Texas oil tycoons, Tim Dunn and Farris Wilks, who have spent nearly \$10 million to back political candidates in Texas who support funding for private education and "attacking those who oppose it."

The state of Florida already has begun an assault on teaching sexuality in schools. In March, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the Parents Rights in Education Bill into law, which prohibits schools from officially instructing students about sexual orientation and gender identity through K-3rd grade, ages 5-9.

In a tweet, O'Rourke chastised Abbott saying the Texas governor was for "defunding public schools." "I'm for fully funding our kids' classrooms and fully supporting parents, teachers and students," O'Rourke says.

But Abbott quickly debunked O'Rourke's remarks, insisting that a voucher plan "does not mean that public schools will not be fully funded—whether they are urban, rural or suburban."

"If you like the public school your child is attending, it will still be fully funded."

Abbott publicly came out in support of private school vouchers two months after winning the primary with 66.5% of the vote.

Allan Parker, president of The Justice Foundation—a Texas nonprofit whose mission is to "restore proper respect for God's Word and law to American jurisprudence"—lamented what he viewed as the spread of liberal ideologies in public schools, The Dallas Morning News reported.

"Now that abortion is illegal in Texas," Parker said, "I believe that the greatest injustice in Texas today is that we compel a family to pay taxes for the education of their children, to send them to a school that teaches them things that aren't in line with their family's values."

The Texas Tribune reported that Defend Texas Liberty supported Republican Nate Schatline with \$168,000. Schatzline is a former pastor running for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives on a campaign to give parents more freedom to decide how and where their children are educated. {eo}

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