

# From the Bully's Pulpit #18 ...

July 1, 2010

From NJEA ...

## More bull-oney from the bully pulpit: CAP 2.5 and vouchers *Call your legislators about Christie's latest propaganda*

We want you to contact your legislators to tell them you're onto a couple of Chris Christie schemes.

**With his draconian budget, he's succeeded in bringing schools and municipalities to the brink of starvation. Now, he wants to deal a fatal blow by muscling through "CAP 2.5."**

Yes, the governor has called an "extraordinary" special session for tomorrow to tell everyone what a great idea this is.

### **But is it really a good idea?**

The truth is, if Christie's 2.5 scheme passes, school boards and municipalities will have to make devastating cuts that will enlarge class sizes, close senior centers, shut down libraries, and generally destroy our communities by laying off police officers, fire fighters and school employees.

Christie says Massachusetts did a cap like this. **But he ignores the fact that Massachusetts increased aid to schools and municipalities at that time. Big difference.**

Of course, the governor will never tell you this. So, you need to tell your legislators that you know the real deal. [SEND THEM AN E-MAIL TODAY!!!](#)

If that weren't enough...

## Another voucher bill push *S-1872/A-2810 not going away*

While slashing more than a billion dollars from public schools, Gov. Christie and some legislators have a scam to funnel public funds to private schools.

In case you forgot, this bill would allow corporations to be reimbursed for paying for "opportunity scholarships" to allow students to attend private and religious schools! A voucher is a voucher by any other name, and this program uses taxpayer dollars to subsidize private and parochial schools.

### **It'll be back soon...**

Last week, legislators were being pressured to push this bill through as early as June 30th or possibly over the summer.

### **So call now!**

[Call your legislators](#) today and tell them you oppose S-1872/A-2810.

Click [here](#) for talking points.

**We make this easy for you in the "members only" section of NJEA's website.**

If this is your first time, here's how it works:

- Go to [www.njea.org](http://www.njea.org)
- Log in by entering your PIN (it's on your membership card) and your password (it's the last four digits of your Social Security number).
- Click "Legislative" on the left-hand side, and then "Cyberlobbying" on the drop down menu below it.

Look for "STOP CAP 2.5" and "Fight Vouchers" and click "Take Action." Follow the instructions to find phone numbers and talking points to call your legislators.

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## From Education Week

# You Need to KNOW about this. Help to save Paterson staff jobs!

## House Dems Trim Race to Top, TIF to Make Room for Edujobs

By [Alyson Klein](#) on June 29, 2010 11:25 PM

The \$4.35 billion Race to the Top fund might be about to get a little smaller. Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, just introduced the latest version of the edujobs bill, which would appear to skim some \$500 million from the administration's signature education reform initiative in hopes of coming up with \$10 billion to help stave off layoffs.

And that's not all. From my reading of the draft now up on the [House Rules Committee website](#), it seems another \$200 million would come out of the Teacher Incentive Fund, which helps districts create pay-for-performance programs. That program received \$400 million this year, plus \$200 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The draft bill also would cut \$100 million appropriated to the U.S. Department of Education in fiscal 2009 for innovation and improvement. It looks like that refers to the part of the law that deals with charter schools. All this is intended to come up with \$800 million in cuts from Education Department discretionary grants, which Democrats said they would seek in order to help fund the education jobs bill.

**The proposed cuts to Race to the Top would leave \$2.9 billion in the pot to reward states for making progress on certain education redesign assurances, assuming that the Education Department doesn't elect to take the cut out of the \$350 million Race to the Top assessment competition. (It looks to me like the bill doesn't target the cut to one part of the program or the other.)**

**UPDATE:** The implications of this move are not lost on the GOP. Rep. John Kline of Minnesota, the top Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee, just put out this statement:

"Democrats have shown their true priorities, jumping at the chance to discard education reform to salvage an unpopular bailout for the education establishment," he said.

Do you think that some Democrats will have similar misgivings, given that this is a real shot across the bow for the Obama agenda? Is getting rid of parts of TIF and Race to the Top, not to mention charter grants, a worthwhile trade for edujobs?

**UPDATE 2:** Here's what John See, a spokesman for the American Federation of Teachers, told me in an email: We support Chairman Obey's bill to keep educators working and protect core education services. We preferred the larger emergency bill, which didn't cut education programs like the Teacher Incentive Fund and Race to the Top. We were not involved in what the offsets would be, or even told about them in advance.

**UPDATE 3:** I asked Peter Cunningham, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of Education, whether he thought the cuts to key education redesign programs were worth the tradeoff for edujobs. "No," he told me, "We think that these reform programs are needed to move [student progress] forward." He said the programs are "very important and driving a historic amount of change." And he noted that there is "huge demand" for the funds...We think jobs and reform are both needed."

He reminded me that the Education Department supported an earlier version of the edujobs bill that would have provided \$23 billion to stave off layoffs, without cuts to other programs. "If Congress is determined to find offsets, we will help them do that, but these are not the right ones."

**Contact Congressman William Pascrell (see page 24 of the P.E.A. Calendar).  
Ask him to support Chairman David Obey's changes to the EduJobs bill!**

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**From the Ed Law Center**

## **And Speaking of Vouchers ...**

### **The Record: Can't vouch for this**

Monday, June 28, 2010

[http://www.northjersey.com/news/opinions/editorials/97284899\\_Can\\_t\\_vouch\\_for\\_this.html](http://www.northjersey.com/news/opinions/editorials/97284899_Can_t_vouch_for_this.html)

RIDDLE US this: When is a voucher not a voucher? When lawmakers call it a scholarship. As in "opportunity scholarship," in a bill proposed by state Sens. Raymond Lesniak, D-Union, and Thomas Kean Jr., R-Union, and supported by Governor Christie. The measure would create a scholarship program for low-income students enrolled in chronically failing public schools, who could apply for and use the funds to attend private, parochial or public schools elsewhere. Corporations would donate the funds to state-approved non-profit agencies, which would distribute the money to students via lottery. Those corporate donors would then be repaid by taxpayers, through a dollar-for-dollar state tax break.

It is a voucher system only Rube Goldberg could invent. These "contributions" and "scholarships" are clumsy euphemisms, and the non-profit pass-through sounds an awful lot like a bag man. What will we hear of next — that the money will be distributed by Reform Jersey Now, the 501(c)(4) run by GOP stalwarts that is accepting unlimited and, so far, untraceable donations to promote Christie's agenda?

Supporters say the bill will rescue students from failing public schools, because it will remove the economic barriers that prevent parents from making a better choice. But in its most recent iteration, S-1872 allows low-income families who already pay for private or parochial schools to qualify for vouchers, though it limits spending on those students to 25 percent of the total.

Within five years, the program could cost up to \$120 million a year — including \$30 million to subsidize students whose families currently pay their way. It is unconscionable for state lawmakers to begin subsidizing private and religious schools while approving \$820 million in public school cuts this year alone.

**We cannot support taxpayer-funded vouchers — no matter what lawmakers call them. Vouchers take money out of the public school system, which is bound by law to educate all children who enroll, and invest it instead in private institutions, which can pick and choose their students. Using taxpayer dollars to pay for religious education violates the Constitution's establishment clause, which prohibits government from financially supporting a religion. This bill would do both.**

Lawmakers are adjusting the proposal; an expected replacement bill would include only communities that specifically volunteer to take part as sending and receiving districts, along with private and parochial schools. On top of the legal and moral hazards this plan presents, we wonder what schools or districts, if any, would sign up. As originally written, the bill appears to promise private, parochial or other public schools \$9,000 or less per student — less than the per-pupil costs at most schools and districts, and hardly an economic incentive to take on students struggling to make up for years of lackluster education.

We support school choice through magnet public and charter schools, because they provide an opportunity to experiment and expand educational variety within the public school system. They are stable, can increase competition and provide justice for families who live near unsafe or ineffective public schools. Market-minded lawmakers should dedicate themselves to improving the charter school law and passing S-1073, which would

formally establish the experimental inter-district school choice pilot program, which expired five years ago.

Instead of subsidizing tuition for current private school students, why not spend that \$30 million on out-of-town busing to top-flight public schools, or on building repairs to help new charter schools get off the ground?

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