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*Does Washington Know Best? Ask Owensboro.*

# **The People Who Made This Map Want to Run Your Child's School**

Few Americans could pinpoint the location of Owensboro, Kentucky. But leave it to the federal government to put Owensboro in Tennessee. That's just what the last Democrat administration did. Despite their serious need of a geography lesson, many Democrats want to control local education decisions from distant Washington, D.C. But how can that help students in Owensboro when the feds can't even find Owensboro on a map?

Republicans believe decisions about a child's education should be made by people who actually know his name. That's why Republicans are pushing for more flexibility for local educators through charter schools and charter states, and more accountability through standards, testing, and

parental choice.

## **The Challenge: To Leave No Child Behind**

- Despite a doubling of real per-pupil spending since 1967, test scores have flat-lined and the



achievement gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students has widened.

- Despite \$120 billion spent by the federal government on Title I, the federal education program for disadvantaged students, the achievement gap between poor and non-poor students persists.
- The 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading test reveals that more than half of Hispanics and American Indians – and nearly *two-thirds* of blacks – failed to achieve a basic level of reading comprehension, compared to roughly one-quarter of whites and Asians/Pacific Islanders.

## **The Solution: Focus On the Child, Not the Bureaucracy**

- **Make Sure Kids Learn.** Republicans want to require states to test children in grades 3-8 each year, compare the results against state-developed standards, and publicize the results to enable parents and policymakers to force changes where needed.
- **Accountability.** Schools that succeed will be rewarded. Schools that fail to improve would first be given assistance, but would face tough accountability measures if they failed for two or more years.

- **Parental Choice.** Students in persistently failing schools should have the choice to transfer to a superior public, charter, or private (not in S. 1) school of their parents' choosing. Experiments in parental choice in Washington, D.C., and Florida helped boost the achievement of both the students who transfer and public schools with a history of low performance.
- **Flexibility.** Rather than dictate how states and localities spend education funds, Republicans want to give them greater flexibility to meet their unique needs. In particular, Republicans want to give states and localities – rather than Washington bureaucrats – the power to decide how and when to hire, train, and retain high-quality teachers.
- **Charter States.** States should also have the option to become “charter states,” releasing them from even more federal mandates in return for meeting strict achievement goals (not in S. 1). Students in Owensboro, Kentucky, have different needs than kids in St. Paul, Davenport, and Columbus.

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