

## **Universal vouchers put school districts in a no-win situation**

The universal voucher system in Ohio was incubated in Cleveland, Ohio by some clever politicians and political campaign funders. On November 25, 1991, at the behest of Governor George Voinovich, President G.H.W. Bush (Bush 41), in a speech before a large audience in Columbus, championed a universal voucher program. This was an idea Economist Milton Friedman touted forty years earlier and President Reagan ten years earlier. Governor Voinovich, a gold medalist in the race for publicity-funded private schools, and his ally, Akron industrialist David Brennan, used the Bush 41 November 1991 speech as a springboard for launching universal vouchers. Ohioans were not interested in universal vouchers in 1991 and Voinovich and Brennan knew it; hence they plotted a plan to incubate the universal voucher scheme.

Voinovich, with the help of some high ranking clergy in the background, formed a Parent Choice Commission. As would be predicted, David Brennan was designated as the chairperson and had a huge footprint on the report and recommendations. The group (Brennan) recommended that each board of education in Ohio establish a voucher program for all students. That recommendation didn't fly, so the legislature was coaxed into enacting a pilot program in the Cleveland School District. The program was sold as merely adding another option for disadvantaged Cleveland students to pursue. From those humble beginnings, with a 15-year voucher expansion campaign led by Legislator Matt Huffman, the voucher scheme has become universal. This puts school districts in a no-win situation.

Now that the voucher scheme is available to all students, the most economically advantaged will no doubt dominate the market. As the demand for voucher dollars escalates, the emphasis on state funding for school districts will lessen, which will require additional school levies. School levies will be more difficult to pass due to less community support for district schools from the voucher group, which will lessen the education opportunities and quality of education in school districts; in turn, more parents will switch to the private sector.

In recent days, the Senate President has announced his campaign to force taxpayers to fund school facilities for private schools.