

The constitutional principle of a wall separating church and state is efficacious for both the church and state: The private school voucher scheme is a wrecking ball directed at that safeguarding wall.

The wall of separation of church and state stood tall and sturdy for nearly two centuries in the United States. All three branches of government boldly resisted the comingling of church and state for nearly two centuries in the nation and the states.

Some folks, particularly the voucher zealots, argue that there is no wall of separation because the Constitution does not incorporate the words “wall of separation”. However, the first amendment screams “separation”! Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. That language certainly prohibits a state religion and permits citizens to engage in religion without government interference. Jefferson talked about the wall of separation on several occasions.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision in the 1947 Everson case blasted a small chip from the wall but set the precedent for more and larger chunks to be removed.

The private school EdChoice voucher scheme and its privatization clones, if not reversed, will remove the last vestige of the wall. The common school system will lose its potency as the enabler of the common good and facilitator of the democracy. The common school system will be bifurcated into two parts—one to serve the wealthy who live in high-property valuation school districts who do not choose private schools and one that serves the disadvantaged and the disabled students.

The first amendment enabled the public common school system to survive and thrive for nearly 200 years. As the first amendment is misconstrued and trodden under foot by self-serving government officials, the public common school system will be starved, and a significant portion of the student population will be harmed for life.