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The Members of the Spartanburg County Legislative Delegation
366 North Church Street
Spartanburg, South Carolina

Re: School Choice (H3407 and S414)

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members,

Kindly suffer me if you will with these: my thoughts and observations regarding an issue that was before the recently completed legislative session and will surely surface again next year, that being the "Educational Opportunity Act," specifically H3407 and S414.

There has been much recent rumbling in the local daily, the "Herald-Journal" regarding a vote taken by the newly identified "Spartanburg Six" by members of the various Taxed Enough Already Party affiliates. Well, I'm certainly taxed enough already, but I must state my complete support of this matter with the "Six," who have now been unfairly targeted in their potential re-election efforts. I support all others of the Delegation who have taken issue with public payment for private or parochial education and support strong public education and schools.

As you are surely aware, the State Constitution in Article XI, Section 3, provides for a "system of free public schools and other institutions of learning;" while Section 4 states that "Direct aid to religious or other private institutions is prohibited." H3407 and S414 are identical documents in that they attempt to circumvent the intent of the aforementioned Section 4 by pretending that scholarships issued by some entity, the State, corporation, affiliation or individual based upon a set of tax credit regulations does not violate this clause. Those who believe that it does not continue to live in la la land.

It has been reported variously that big-moneyed people, South Carolinians and well as non-residents wholeheartedly support the efforts of those in favor of H3407 and S414 and have lavished generous financial support to certain members of the House and Senate in an effort to pass this legislation. But why? Can anyone answer? The only sense I can make out of this is that they stand to reap some sort of financial gain some time in the future... even more so than the power they would exercise from on high. It's bad enough that Washington wants to dictate our every living moment; but if supporters of H3407 and S414 want a bunch of out-of-staters and their followers telling us how to run the State's affairs, just say so.

I have also heard comments that some on the national level desire to eliminate public education altogether and I assume replace it with some sort of private system. This can be done right here in South Carolina: supporters of H3407 and S414 must summon the courage to propose a Constitutional Amendment so stating if that's what they want.

But what exactly is the instant issue and just how did we get here? The instant issue is simply the desire of some to obtain public reimbursement by whatever means possible and in accordance with specific financial constraints for private or parochial education. Period. Case closed. It cannot be sugar-coated... if it walks, talks and acts like a duck, it's duck. Indeed, a pig in top hat and tails is still a pig, and I mean no disrespect for the pig. Or the duck. I must state for your perusal that I have long been opposed to any public funds being appropriated for any private purpose whatsoever, no matter how noble. I have been accused by some of harboring political persuasions somewhat to the right of Attila the Hun; however, not when it comes to public education and its funding mechanism.

The South Carolina Board of Economic Advisors has estimated a potential loss of approximately \$800 million to the general fund of the State and a loss in the neighborhood of \$1 billion to public education upon full implementation of H3407 and S414 should they become law. This is serious money, certainly debatable in its accuracy but until proven otherwise, figures I can believe in.

How we got here is relatively simple. A breakdown in the very fabric of society and family structure which began in the 1960's has led to a disastrous lack of discipline and accountability of self. Certainly nowhere near a majority of the country, but in numbers sufficient to produce a change for the worse from my perspective that our forebears could never imagine. Public schools cannot possibly be all things to all students all the time, any more than private or parochial schools; but we do hear the cry for "school choice" when discussing what has become known as "failing schools."

I will not belabor the issue of federal or state testing and its inherent results, other than to say that I can think of no rational way or method to qualify each and every classroom in each and every school to evaluate each and every student to ascertain a specific and continual positive or negative result. Far too many parents and guardians in today's society have zero concept of what goes on in their child's school. Many simply just don't care; but to accuse public schools of "failing our children" is callous and wrong. To those who would direct effort and resources away from public education I say get off your butt and get involved completely and consistently to change things for the better. Our collective

children's future depends on it. Failure and poor performance can be overcome; this I know first hand... it's been done in a much tougher and more thoroughly complex school district than anyone in South Carolina has ever seen.


School choice. You have it now. Those who wish private or parochial education for their children, by all means exercise that right which I fully support. But you must pay for it yourself. My taxes contribute to the public school system in South Carolina; if you choose not to utilize these available facilities, end of story. The only way H3407 and S414 can work is a serious reduction in state education and other services or tax increases. It cannot work any other way and I see no financial savings on the horizon. I'll gladly pay once, but don't embarrass yourself by asking me to pay twice to educate your child.

To the "Spartanburg Six" and others of the Delegation on the side of what is right and good regarding this issue I say thank you for your recent vote. I will stand with you in the face of any adversarial notion. Keep up the good fight.

These opinions and assertions are wholly mine, and should anyone wish a local debate upon the merits of the instant issue, name the time, date and place and I will gladly accept the challenge.

As always, I thank you for your time and consideration, and your service to the good citizens of South Carolina, and I humbly remain,

Very truly yours,



James W. Herzog
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P.S. If anyone wants to absolutely assure "school choice," please consider the proposal on the following page.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT:

BE IT RESOLVED, that any parent or legal guardian of any school age child shall have the right to transfer said child to any public school in any public school district for any given school year in the State of South Carolina. State funding shall follow the student to whatever public school district that the child attends.