

California voters to decide on school choice

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A key player in the nationwide school-choice movement, William Bennett outlined how 174's fate will influence the rest of the nation when he addressed San Francisco's Commonwealth Club on Friday morning, Oct. 8. His address was broadcast by Rochester's WXXI-AM1370.

"This is the mother of all ballot initiatives," Bennett said of 174, noting to the Californians, "the country watches you — you are the future for good or bad."

Bennett said that during his tenure as education secretary, he realized that many wealthy citizens buy schooling for their children — and that such schooling puts their children at an advantage over impoverished public-school students.

"The poor need good education more than anything else," he asserted.

Bennett complained that too many public schools are hampered by bureaucratic and disciplinary challenges that make it difficult to perform effectively in the changing national and international scene. Although he noted that many public schools do a fine job of educating their students, too few do so in a world in which education is becoming a matter of economic life or death.

Bennett and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp are co-directors of Empower America, and are the probably the best-known backers of 174.

"We are convinced this is an opportunity for families to send a signal not just to Sacramento, but to Washington and to the nation," Kemp said as he announced the group's stand on 174 at a September press conference in Washington, D.C.

At that time, Bennett made many of the same observations he stressed at the

Commonwealth Club.

His strongest criticisms of the nation's public-school system were based on statistics showing that 90 million Americans are illiterate and that more than half of the country's high school students drop out of school.

At the Commonwealth Club, Bennett added that if giving parents school choice would destroy the public school system, such destruction may be justified.

"If enormous numbers of (students) leave, let's put the system out of its pain and suffering," he said. "Bad schools should go out of business."

Discontent with public schools has engendered calls for school choice since the beginning of the 1990s in at least 24 states, according to a June article in *Forbes* magazine.

Most school-voucher initiatives have failed at the ballot box, the article noted, but that may change in the next few years.

Indeed, even opposing candidates in the city of Rochester's current mayoral campaigns have been called upon to outline their position on school choice.

Like many Republicans, Mark Dulaney has come out strongly in favor of school choice in his mayoral cam-

paign. In information sent by fax to the *Courier*, Dulaney noted that, if elected, he would support a school-choice program much like that entailed in 174.

His opponent, Democratic nominee Bill Johnson, told the *Courier* he was open to the idea of school choice, but that he had concerns over whether tax dollars should go to private schools that can discriminate against certain types of students.

Three out of five Americans now favor the use of tax money to provide vouchers for parents to choose pub-

lic, private or parochial school education for their children, according to a Gallup Poll released last year.

The poll, which also showed that seven in 10 Catholics supported the use of tax money for vouchers, was conducted by the Gallup organization for the National Catholic Educational Association.

When the poll was released, Robert Kealey, executive director of the NCEA's elementary schools department, said the use of tax money for school choice has a great deal of support among minorities, with 76 percent of the African-American respondents and 67 percent of the Hispanics favoring government funding.

Indeed, the July edition of *Readers' Digest* notes that Polly Williams, a former welfare mother turned Democratic state legislator in Wisconsin, lobbied on behalf of a successful school-choice bill in the state legislature by forging an alliance of conservative Democrats, Republicans and black legislators.

"Unlikely alliances like these don't happen every day," wrote John Q. Norquist, Milwaukee mayor and co-author of the *Digest* article. "When they do, you can feel the ground under the status quo start to shake."

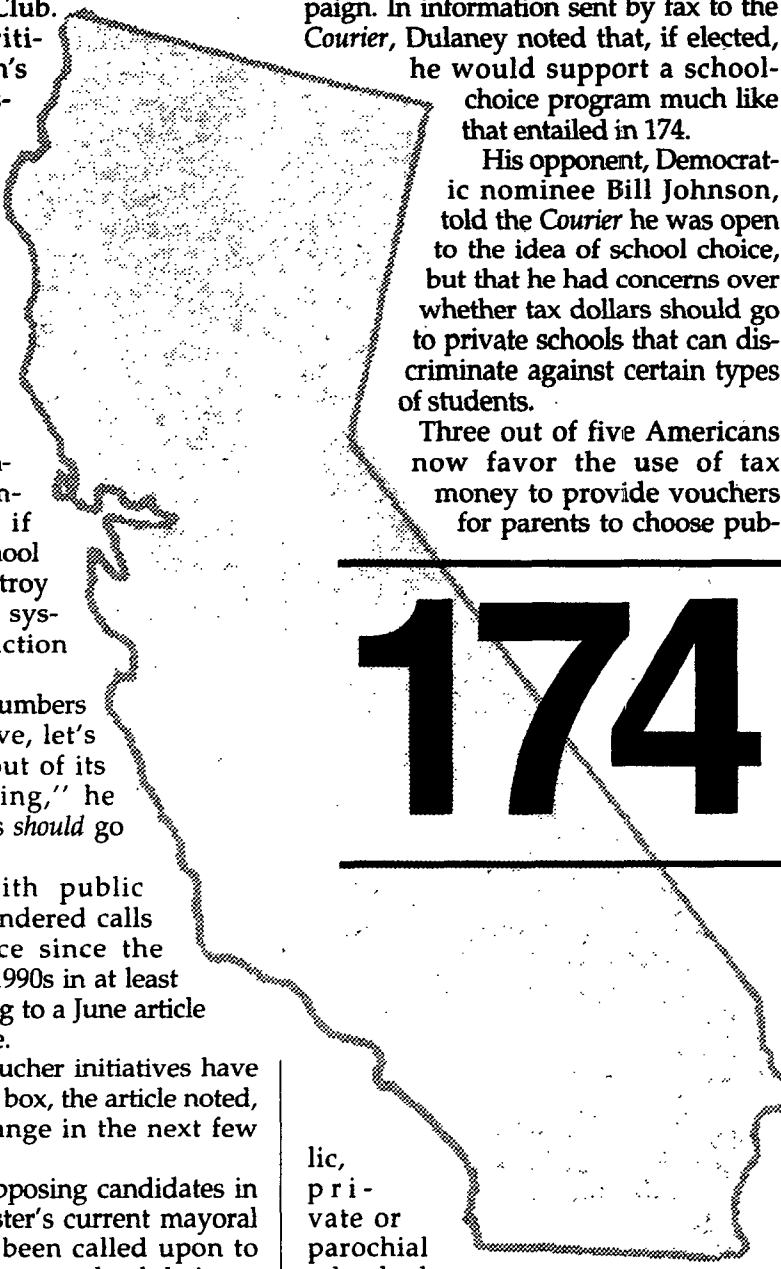
Brian Bennett echoed Norquist's observations when he described himself as a "liberal Democrat" who now finds himself allied with such Republicans as William Bennett and Kemp over the school choice issue.

What apparently unites school-choice proponents, Bennett argued, is their children. Many parents of both liberal and conservative persuasion simply desire more control over the education of their offspring, he noted.

William Bennett said much the same thing at the end of his address to the Commonwealth Club. He complained that opponents of school choice dwell too much on the schools that might close and not enough on the students they serve.

"Education is not for them," he said of the public school establishment. "Education is for the children."

Contains information from Catholic News Service.



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@bituaries

Sr. Teresa Agnes Bostwick, SSJ; longtime diocesan schoolteacher

PITTSFORD — Sister Teresa Agnes Bostwick, SSJ, who taught for in diocesan elementary schools for 43 years, died on Thursday, Sept. 30, 1993, at the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent Infirmary, 4095 East Ave. She was 84.

A Newark native, Sister Teresa Agnes entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Michael's in 1931. She was a graduate of Nazareth Academy and Nazareth College.

Among the schools in which Sister Teresa Agnes taught were: St. Patrick Cathedral School, St. Anthony of Padua School, St. Augustine School and St. Francis Xavier School, all in Rochester; St. Francis de Sales School in Geneva; St.

Casimir School in Elmira; St. Mary School in Dansville; and St. Patrick School in Corning.

After retiring to the SSJ motherhouse in 1975, she moved to the convent infirmary in 1981. She remained at the infirmary until her death.

She is survived by two sisters, Veronica Lefferts of Newton, Pa., and Margaret Austin of Le Roy; several nephews and nieces; and the Sisters of St. Joseph community.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Oct. 1 in the motherhouse chapel. Father John Hayes was the principal celebrant, with Father Donald Curtiss assisting.

Phoebe Hogan, 76; bishop's sister

LIMA — Phoebe M. Hogan, a lifelong parishioner of St. Rose Church, died at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester on Tuesday, Oct. 5, 1993, after a long illness. She was 76.

Ms. Hogan was a sister of Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, who headed the diocese from 1969 to 1978, and Father Michael Hogan, pastor of St. Mary, Our Lady of the Hills in Honeoye.

A graduate of St. Rose School, Lima High School and Rochester Business Institute, Ms. Hogan spent most of her adult life as a buyer in the purchasing office of Veteran's Hospital in Bath and

later Canandaigua.

"She was, in her own quiet way, very kind to many people who respected her own goodness," Bishop Hogan recalled. "She was very well-respected."

A Mass of Resurrection was celebrated at St. Rose on Friday, Oct. 8. Interment took place at St. Rose Cemetery.

In addition to the priest brothers, Ms. Hogan was survived by another brother, Daniel Hogan, and his wife Ruth of Penfield; two sisters, Gertrude Brooks of Honeoye Falls, and Mary Rose Hogan of Lima; and several nieces and nephews.