



*A Union of Professionals*

## Why Betsy DeVos Is the Wrong Choice for Education Secretary

### **SHE LACKS EXPERIENCE.**

Betsy DeVos has no experience with public education. None. Dating back to Terrel Bell, who was secretary of education during the Reagan administration, every education secretary has had experience in the federal government or public education, either at the state or district level, before becoming secretary: Lamar Alexander was integrally involved in education reform as governor. Rod Paige was the superintendent of the Houston public schools. Margaret Spellings was George W. Bush's White House domestic policy adviser. Bill Bennett headed the National Endowment for the Humanities.

When the Department of Education was founded, its mission was to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness. It does this by ensuring that all our children have real, meaningful educational opportunities. This mission has endured through Republican and Democratic administrations alike, and we cannot afford to abandon it.

### **HER GOAL IS TO DESTROY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

DeVos' agenda is clear: end public schools. Her organization, the American Federation for Children, is a rebranding of the pro-voucher, pro-privatization Advocates for School Choice, and it exists to give money to support voucher programs across the country.

Blindly following an unproven Republican education agenda, Donald Trump proposed an expensive, nationwide \$20 billion school voucher program. The plan would divert funds from the Every Student Succeeds Act, which was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, to new "choice" block grants to states, which will fund private, charter and home schools.

### **SHE IS PURSUING A FAILED EDUCATION POLICY.**

Voucher programs have proven ineffective, lack accountability to taxpayers, and deprive students of rights provided to public school students. They also divert desperately needed resources away from public schools, which serve all children, to fund the education of a few select voucher students.

### **SHE IS PURSUING A POLICY THAT VIOLATES THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.**

Vouchers violate the fundamental guarantee of religious freedom by funding religious schools. Public money should not fund religious education. In addition, vouchers can threaten the autonomy of religious schools by requiring them to comply with government safeguards.

### **SHE IS PURSUING A POLICY THAT VIOLATES CIVIL RIGHTS.**

Private schools don't provide the same fundamental civil rights protections as public schools, including basic guarantees prohibiting discrimination based on national origin, disability, gender and religion. A critical function of the Department of Education is to ensure that all our children have meaningful educational opportunities by enforcing critical federal civil rights laws.

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The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten  
PRESIDENT

Loretta Johnson  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mary Cathryn Ricker  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • 202-879-4400 • [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

