

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice

Advancing Milton and Rose D. Friedman's Vision of School Choice for All Children

Missouri voters favor district transfers, tax credits for private scholarships

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ST. LOUIS, MO—School choice is a controversial subject among many state lawmakers, district superintendents, and even Gov. Nixon. But the Missouri electorate favor the policy, which the legislature is considering now and will likely to consider next year.

A new survey conducted by Braun Research, Inc., found 67 percent of Missouri voters support giving state income tax credits to individuals and business for donating to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships. Twenty-seven percent oppose the idea.

The Braun Research survey was released by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, an organization that researches and supports school choice. According to that group, 14 states have tax-credit scholarship programs similar to what Missouri's school choice advocates are promoting.

"Voter support for school choice is prompting lawmakers nationwide to act," Robert Enlow, president and CEO of the Friedman Foundation, said. "Recognizing that all students learn differently in different settings is why Oklahoma lawmakers launched a tax-credit scholarship program in 2013 and Kansas lawmakers approved one in 2014."

Other findings on tax-credit scholarships from the Friedman/Braun Research survey include:

- 59 percent supported making all families eligible for scholarships, regardless of income; 33 were opposed.
- 46 percent opposed and 46 percent supported a "means-tested" scholarship program, based on families' financial needs.
- 33 percent said they were more likely to vote for a candidate for governor or state lawmaker because of his or her support for tax-credit scholarships; 14 percent were less likely, and 47 percent said it made no difference.
- 67 percent of Democrats, 76 percent of Republicans, and 64 percent of Independents favored tax-credit scholarships.

A school transfer policy allowing students to leave unaccredited schools districts, which was upheld last summer by the Missouri Supreme Court, also was posed to voters by Braun Research. Sixty percent favored, and 30 percent opposed, allowing students to switch to an accredited school district within or adjoining their county.

"When it comes to empowering parents in education, there is a clear disconnect between what Missouri voters want and what their elected official are doing," said Brenda Talent, CEO of Missouri's Show-Me Institute, a free market think tank that released the survey in partnership with the Friedman Foundation. "It's time our state's leaders bring the national trend for school choice home."

The Friedman-Braun Research survey also asked voters their opinions on the quality of public education overall, per-student spending, and their preferred educational settings among public,

charter, private, and home schools. For voters, education was the most important issue facing Missouri behind the economy and jobs.

Braun Research has been used by such research firms as the Gallup Organization and the Pew Research Center. Its survey comprises 660 telephone interviews conducted in English from Feb. 27-March 11, 2014, by means of both landline and cell phone. Statistical results have been weighted to correct for known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is ± 4.0 percentage points. The survey's questionnaire, results, and methodology are available at edchoice.org/MissouriSurvey.

About the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and nonpartisan organization, solely dedicated to advancing Milton and Rose D. Friedman's vision of school choice for all children. The Foundation promotes school choice as the most effective and equitable way to improve the quality of K-12 education in America.

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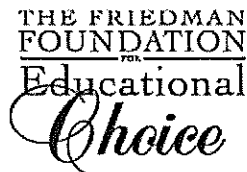
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