



**STATE POWER,  
SUBURBAN INTERESTS,  
AND  
CITY SCHOOL REFORM**

**A NINE-STATE COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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**HOWARD SAMUELS STATE MANAGEMENT AND POLICY CENTER AT  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY CENTER OF  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

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## **ABOUT THE HOWARD SAMUELS STATE MANAGEMENT AND POLICY CENTER**

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In the past two decades, the roles of state and local governments have increased greatly as federalist policies are pursued and power is devolved away from the federal government to more local structures. As a result, the need for applied research on state and city level policy and politics has never been greater. The Samuels Center works to fulfill that need by publishing reports on politics and policy on the state and city level.

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Marilyn Gittell  
Director  
Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center

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## INTRODUCTION

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For the last several years, the Howard Samuels Center has engaged in research on comparative state school politics with a special concern for the issue of constituency building and urban school reform. In 1996 we began this three-year comparative state study of education policy-making in nine states, California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Texas, to determine the impact of state politics on city school reform. We chose these states to reflect differences in region, state political culture, and state institutional structure.

This study, undertaken between the years 1996 and 1999, highlights two policy issues: charter school legislation and equitable school financing. These policies were chosen because of their prominence and relevance for understanding state politics. By studying the various stakeholders and their roles, the coalitions formed, and those who benefited, we worked to locate the key actors within state-level regimes, ascertain their educational agendas, and especially to determine the effectiveness of urban school advocacy groups and stakeholders within each regime for achieving school reform.

Charter schools propose to offer more choice to students and are an attempt to encourage school innovation through autonomy from state, district, and union regulations. Indeed, in levels of autonomy, these schools do differ from state to state and within school districts. For example, some states place caps on the number of charter schools and limits on who may apply for a charter while others exempt schools from many state and local rules, have no limits as to the number of schools, and/or permit the use of uncertified teachers.

School finance policies provide an opportunity to explore the stakeholders in school reform and to see more closely the impact of place: the power of urban and rural areas and suburban school districts. Our primary interest was in city advocacy groups, city officials, governors, and business groups. School equity reforms aim to change the current system of funding schools through the local property tax, as it leads to significant differences in funding from district to district, often benefiting the wealthier suburban districts. States have been forced to address this issue due to legal action and the related pressure of state court decisions. Some states, however, have initiated reforms without court involvement.

As a result of this nine state study of state political regimes, we concluded that state power in education has shifted from state legislatures to governors, many of whom were elected on conservative platforms and have little interest in reforming urban school districts and even less interest in building local advocacy and participation. We found, with some exceptions, a dearth of local city advocacy groups in the state capitals who promoted the interests and priorities of city students and school districts. Coalitions of city advocates were virtually non-existent. It was not surprising to find a lack of a counter-force to the distinctively anti-city school politics in the states and a lack of interest in, and even an antagonism toward, issues of equity, diversity, and urban school reform by important state actors, especially governors. State aid policies, financial equity, decentralization, and affirmative action, historically part of the urban agenda, were not a part of state school policy agendas. Even in states where court decisions called for state action on equitable school funding, the state education regimes ignored or evaded the orders. The new state agendas dictated by gubernatorial politics included high-stakes testing, expansion of standards, vouchers, and charter schools.

Our findings are based on the literature, local news coverage, almost 200 formal interviews with stakeholders in the nine states, and many other informal discussions with participants in school reform. Interviewees included city council members, city and state superintendents, gubernatorial staff, legislative members and their staff, union representatives, business executives, education advocates, university faculty, directors of professional associations and mayoral staff. These individuals were asked questions about their involvement and interests in education reform, power relations in education policy in their state, the history of finance and charter school reform, coalition activity, and the impact of these recent reforms on urban schools.

### **Regime Theory**

The intent of our study is to describe state education regimes. Regime theory is based on the idea that governance requires the coordination of governmental and non-governmental resources which is beyond the capacity of elected officials (Stoker 1995). In the political science literature, regime theory has been applied to urban politics, but it can also describe state level politics. Education policy at the state-level is dominated by a constant group of formal and informal participants. Because public power is limited, politicians seek out private interests and

form governing coalitions. Elected officials have to reach out to the private sector to gain human, structural, and monetary resources. Private interests including businesses, unions, and other organized interest groups, provide funding and organize their members to support the governing coalition. Politicians mobilize public support and offer the resources of government. Together, private interests and politicians converge around a particular goal or agenda to govern the state. This coalition, if it is stable and lasts beyond election cycles, may be called a regime. Clarence Stone provides a clear definition of a regime: “a regime thus involves not just any informal group that comes together to make a decision but an informal yet relatively stable group with access to institutional resources that enable it to have a sustained role in making governing decisions” (Stone 1989, 4).

Regime theory has been criticized for overlooking issues like racism, anti-city politics, and party organization; it is said to focus too closely on regime participants and not enough on a location’s history, economy, and political environment (Kantor 1997). Recognizing the justness of this criticism, in this study we closely look at each state’s history and political culture. State political culture can be understood as a set of political attitudes which has grown out of a state’s particular historical experiences, patterns of immigration, and institutional structures. While we found many similarities among the states in terms of the composition and agenda of the state education regimes, each state also had its own unique characteristics, a reflection of the fact that, although national trends have affected all state education regimes, individual states have developed their own responses to these trends. (Appendix A includes state by state descriptions of our findings regarding important elements in their political culture.)

An examination of the state education regimes is especially important because education scholars have neglected this area of study. Most of the existing literature on the politics of education concentrates on the national or the school district level. Yet, the states are legally responsible for the education of resident children. Lewis and Maruna wrote about the problem with the existing literature:

What is surprising in this literature is the lack of much empirical, comparative work on the states’ educational activity and reform. It turns out that we know very little about the factors associated with different outcomes at the state level. While there is much normative work on what scholars and activists want to happen, there is not much work on what has happened and what political factors

produced these outcomes (notwithstanding the occasional comparative case study) (Lewis and Maruna 1996, 439).

### **The Old Education Regime**

State education regimes have been dominated by school professionals and their associations. These include the chief state school officer (CSSO), the state education department, the state board of education, their local counterparts, teachers' unions, and the supervisors' associations. Elected officials and other interest groups have had less of a role in determining state education policy.

The roots of professional power are in the ideology of the Progressive Era which led administrators to attempt to limit the role of politics in education. They believed they could best educate children by applying the principles of scientific management to increase efficiency and rationality. They achieved control over education by establishing a centralized bureaucracy and by limiting the power of elected school boards (Bastian et al 1986). As a result of this institutional rearrangement, education policy has since that time been controlled by a "subculture of state education policy-makers" led by these professional elites (Marshall 1989).

Teachers' unions became significant players in education during the sixties. Before the 1960s teachers were almost invisible in the arena of education policymaking, but in the 1960s the first major teachers strike, held in New York City, forever changed their status in the policy process (Lieberman 1997). Several highly successful strikes were organized by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and in the 1960s, the National Education Association (NEA) became more teacher-oriented as school administrators, the founders of the NEA, left the association to form their own organizations (Martin 1994). The control by teachers unions and professionals was also replicated at the city level where power was dominated by the central administrative staff and the teachers unions. Often school and community activists were given the appearance of involvement. Wilbur Rich calls this tripartite of urban education power the Public School Cartel (Rich 1996).

The direct involvement of business in education dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Involvement varies from a direct stake in school policy, such as book binders and school construction contractors to a more indirect, but still important stake in school policy, the requirement of well-educated workers. From the beginning, the business community

promoted compulsory education in the states and national programs of vocational education. They allied with the professionals during the reformist Progressive Era and were influential in introducing Taylorism into education (Marshall 1992). They again became involved during the 1950s when they criticized the schools for their lack of concentration on math and sciences and brought about a national concern for “excellence.” Most recently, they have favored vouchers and increased standards.

State elected officials, for most of this century, were less involved with setting the educational agenda than non-governmental actors. Legislative leaders became more involved in education policy in the 1960s due to “increased judicial activism, the growing power of social movements demanding change, increasing education costs and a recognized need for more efficient use of school resources” (Lewis and Maruna 1999, 443). Public activism, which helped fuel this new legislative action in the 1960s, was derived from *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Movement (Gittell 1980). However, as these leaders lacked staff and time, they often responded to pressures from the professional interest groups and relied on the bureaucracy. Often this resulted in piecemeal policy generation (Usdan 1969). During the 1980s, legislative committees and their chairs became the work-horses of policy making and their expertise was valued by the legislature as a whole (Patterson 1990; Rosenthal 1990).

Prior to the late 1980s, governors exercised little influence over education policy. They had little formal or informal control over the school bureaucracy and rarely initiated policies. Many have suggested their lack of involvement was due to the traditional separation of education from politics. However, there were also issues of ideology and race that could have negatively impacted the political careers of outspoken governors and mayors (Gittell 1967). This historical gubernatorial trend is in sharp contrast to recent presidential campaigns in which the public cited education as a primary concern and the candidates responded.

### **External Changes in the 1980s**

In the 1980s a number of changes in American politics led to the weakening of the old regime. The organization of excluded groups recognized that school policy did not address the racism that produced disparities in learning. Additionally, the growing professionalism of state government strengthened the role of governors. In 1983 the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a national study of the failure of American education to meeting high standards of performance,

brought business strongly back into education policy. Finally, the attention by the media to educational failure and inequities focused public opinion on education as a key policy issue.

### **Institutional Growth**

The increase in gubernatorial power over state education policy is, in part, a spill over from the general growth in the power of the governor's office. Beginning in the late 1960s, governors increased their formal and informal powers in all areas of policy making. By the end of the 1970s most states had professionalized their executive offices with larger staff and cabinets, longer terms of office, consecutive terms, and veto powers. Governors also gained more control over the state budget and state agencies and received larger areas of budgetary discretion (Van Horn 1989; Renshon 1992). Notably, the average state changed governors only once between 1980 and 1989 (Greenblatt 1996, 1809).

Due to the devolution of power under several presidential concepts of a "new federalism," state government continued to grow in power and responsibility during the 1980s. Governors took advantage of their new policy responsibilities. Concurrently, they shaped the federal programs and initiated a range of new policies in health, welfare, and education in their states (Van Horn 1989). Governors gained political stature with these expanded roles and today regularly advise congress and the president (Kirschten 1995). Beyle notes, "individually, governors have been strengthened; as a group, they have solidified their position as leaders within the federal system" (Beyle 1992, 33).

In the past decade, the enhanced status of the National Governors Association (NGA) furthered the gubernatorial role at the federal level. The NGA played a major role in the creation and passage of the two major welfare reforms, the 1988 Family Support Act and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The NGA was also instrumental in placing education reform on the national agenda and was a strong proponent of the Goals 2000 legislation, one of President Clinton's major education policies. It is also indicative of gubernatorial ascendancy that the last two presidents have been governors.

### ***A Nation at Risk***

In the early 1980s, with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* and other reports, business community interest in education reform increased. These studies indicated that compared to

students elsewhere, U.S. students' academic achievements were average or even inferior. This added to concerns about the ability of American workers to compete effectively with their counterparts abroad. In response, individual CEOs, the Business Roundtable, and other business coalitions began to articulate their need for an educated workforce and became more directly involved in education policy. They argued that quality schools and student excellence were necessary for maintaining and attracting business investment. They correspondingly blamed local public school systems for the apparent decline in American economic competitiveness (Bastian et al 1996).

The private sector thus exerted influence in the political arena, supporting increased appropriations and taxes for education. The business groups became involved at the local level by sponsoring individual schools (Martin 1994). They also influenced the shift towards an interest in standards in education. In the 1980s states adopted educational standards but placed fewer resources in programs that would move all students to reach these goals. The shift away from a concern with equity was significant: "The development of a universal curriculum was devised to establish rewards based on competitive performance and was rationalized as achieving equal opportunity for learning. In fact, students were subjected to a competitive system, but not on an equal basis. No one can argue with the goal of high standards, but the real issues are how they are implemented and how resources are devoted to achieve them" (Gittell 1993, n.p.).

### **Popularity of Education**

During the 1980s, media attention to educational failure increased. Slowly, the public became convinced that education policy should be a political priority. A 1997 poll by Lake Research showed children's issues, which include education and health care, "are poised to become the new third rail of American politics, along with traditional issues concerning seniors such as Social Security and Medicare" (Lake et al 1997). Voters indicated children's issues were of increasing importance to them. Lake's research showed education was the issue that voters most wanted Congress to address after the 1996 election (1997).

Thus, as the old regime weakened, new players, attitudes, and priorities took the field, prepared to do legal, political, and legislative battle.

## **Structural Approach**

In the first section of our study, by way of background, we look at the national trend of suburbanization and how this demographic shift has affected school politics. Simply, the United States, over the previous fifty years, became a suburban nation. This growth of the suburbs and related decline of cities left cities politically weak in relation to the suburbs and eroded the urban tax base. Because the suburbs have both the votes and the money, urban schools are languishing and unable to get the help they need to supplement their limited funds and solve other dire problems. This is because state level politicians are beholden to suburban voters, many of whom are apathetic and hostile to the cities.

The second section is devoted to a description of the political culture of the nine states and an analysis of how each state's individual culture is reflected in education policy. We demonstrate that, despite the common assertion that education policy is not linked to politics, political culture has a real impact on how states approach education policy. For example, traditionally progressive states are more bold in experimenting with reforms, while states with a populist tradition evidence a greater level of popular participation in education politics.

The politics of finance reform is the focus of the third section of this study. Here we discuss the different ways the states attempted to deal with restructuring the system of financing schools. Urban school advocates have used state courts to challenge unequal financing systems. Several governors have attempted to centralize the financing system and provide more funding to rural and property-poor suburbs. Maryland is the only state in our study that targeted increased funds to achieve greater equity to a city during the course of our research. Even as court cases increase, equalizing school finances has become a very unpopular issue.

Section four addresses the politics of charter schools. In examining the process behind the passage of charter school legislation in the states, we found that governors often championed this measure. Teachers' unions, however, did not support charter schools, but they were forced to compromise on the policy in almost every state. The business community has come out strongly in favor of vouchers and charters, seeking what they described as market conditions in education. In many states, charter schools were ultimately adopted after voucher legislation failed.

In the fifth section we examine city education regimes and their relationship to state education regimes, looking at city mayors, community organizers, education advocates, teachers unions, and the business community. In assessing the effectiveness of these urban groups, we concluded they demonstrated a startling lack of influence on state politics. This absence of clout was due to numerous constraints enumerated herein.

Throughout this report, we include information about specific states, individuals, and organizations. These sidebars aim to expand on points within the chapters and provide details on each state that are sometimes forgotten when trying to draw generalizations.

## **SUBURBANIZATION AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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Our study of urban schools compares education politics and policymaking in nine states. These states, California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Texas, experienced dramatic population shifts in the past four decades that created soaring suburban growth and population decline in center cities. This foundational chapter explores the connection between national demographic shifts and the politics of education. In many of the states we found the suburban demographic shift reflected in the party shifts in state legislatures and governors offices. Its impact on state school policies is profound.

America has become a suburban nation. Between 1960 and 1995 the proportion of people living outside central cities increased by fifteen percent (Oliver 1997). Additionally, most of the economic growth of the 1980s and 90s occurred in the suburbs (Orfield 1997). The suburbs became politically and economically dominant: in the 1990s sixty percent of the population in 320 metropolitan areas lived in the suburbs and a majority of jobs were there as well (Rusk 1995). Suburbs are now so large that many suburban officials and residents believe they are autonomous entities, unconnected to their central cities. Garreau (1991) calls such places "edge cities." In their denial of a social or economic connection to the central city, edge city residents have been typically unwilling to pay for city services such as schools and public housing. This phenomenon has created extreme divisions between cities and suburbs.

### **The Effect of Suburbanization on Cities**

American cities have suffered as a result of suburbanization. Regional polarization created blighted central cities, decaying inner suburbs and new growth at the metropolitan fringe. After World War II, the White middle class began moving to the suburbs. Cities, however, remained healthy until the 1960s when mandated school desegregation accelerated the White suburban exodus. Business and commerce followed suit. With diminished tax bases the cities declined, schools deteriorated, and crime rates rose. Poor African Americans, with few employment opportunities, remained in the cities. A 1997 study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) looked at the demographic changes that cities faced. One of the major findings was that:

poverty rates in central cities rose steadily from 1970 to 1993, increasing by over 50 percent. Since 1993, the national poverty rate has fallen and there has been a very slight decline in the central city rate as well. But in 1995, one of every five central city residents was still living in poverty compared to less than one in every ten suburban residents (HUD 1997, 32).

The concentration of poverty in cities continued to increase in northeastern and midwestern cities (Orfield 1997). At the time of our study nearly every metropolitan region in the nation had a core of "dense poverty" (Orfield 1997, 2). The HUD study confirmed these findings. For example, the report found "most of the jobs fueling metropolitan growth are being created in the suburbs...the concentration of the poor within many urban areas has been increasing. More than ten percent of all city residents live in census tracts with poverty rates of 40 percent or more" (HUD 1997, 5).

Cities that experience major population loss, have a high percentage of minorities, and an average per capita incomes of less than seventy percent of suburban income levels are called "point of no return cities" by Rusk (1995). He identified twenty-four such cities in the U.S.; five of them, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Newark, are major cities in our case study states. Moreover, the urban core of poverty and racial segregation has intensified. For example, the HUD study found Philadelphia lost 68,125 jobs between 1990 and 1995 while 60,991 jobs left Baltimore in the same period (HUD 1997).

According to Rusk, suburban growth is especially damaging to inelastic cities that cannot expand their boundaries because of geographical or political obstacles (1995). Income inequality between cities and their suburbs is especially significant in these cities where residents have much lower incomes than their suburban counterparts. In Detroit and Cleveland, for example, urban incomes are fifty-three percent of suburban incomes (Rusk 1995). Inelastic cities have higher rates of poverty and segregation. Elastic cities tend to have more integrated metropolitan areas are more economically successful (Rusk 1995). Inelastic cities are more prevalent in the Northeast and Midwest, while cities in the South and the West are able to annex surrounding suburbs, boosting their economies and integrating their social institutions. The table below shows the decline in middle and upper income families in the central cities.

**Distribution of Central City and Suburban Families by Income, 1969, 1979, and 1989 (in percent)**

Year	Low income		Middle income		High income	
	Central Cities	Suburbs	Central Cities	Suburbs	Central Cities	Suburbs
1969	20.2	14.5	59.9	60.6	19.9	24.9
1979	23.6	14.7	58.0	60.4	18.4	24.9
1989	24.5	14.0	57.6	60.4	17.8	25.7

Source: Reprinted from The State of the Cities, June 1997, 38, Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Census of Population and Housing.

Notes: Low-income families have incomes below the national 20<sup>th</sup> percentile family income. Middle-income families have incomes between the national 20<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> family income percentiles. High-income families have incomes above the national 80<sup>th</sup> percentile family income.

**The Political Ramifications of Suburbanization**

The political consequences of suburbanization are hard to overstate. Most important is that the suburbs gained political power at the state level while cities have lost influence. Thus, the suburbs are the new locus of political power, representing over half of the American population (Orfield 1997). Other ramifications include the economic connection between cities and suburbs that have been largely ignored by suburban officials who are typically not concerned with urban issues. An historical anti-city bias among suburban residents creates powerful obstacles to regional solutions and coalition building between suburbs and cities. Moreover, racism and classism have strengthened urban/suburban cleavages. Finally, central cities tend to vote Democratic while the suburbs lean Republican (Orfield 1997).

Anti-city sentiments are tied to racism as urban areas have minority concentrations. Despite claims that African Americans and Latinos have also migrated to the suburbs, census data shows minority population increases in the suburbs were marginal. In example, between 1980 and 1990 the minority population increased in both urban and suburban areas by only three percent. The reality is that cities are still largely home to minority groups. By 1990, African

Americans and Latinos comprised thirty-six percent of the U.S. urban population and only fourteen percent of the U.S. suburban population. In some states like New Jersey, these numbers are more extreme as city populations are sixty-three percent minority while the suburbs are only fifteen percent.

Table One shows urban and suburban African American populations have remained relatively stable, although suburban African American populations did decline in Illinois and New Jersey. In five of these nine states, African American urban population percentages increased slightly. Meanwhile the Latino suburban population increased in all nine states, albeit at varying levels. In short, new suburban population growth is predominantly among White and Latino populations.

**Table One. Percentages of African Americans and Latinos in Urban and Suburban Areas for Each State, in 1980 and 1990.**

STATE	URBAN AREAS		SUBURBAN AREAS	
	1980	1990	1980	1990
California - African American	12.27%	10.44%	5.08%	5.10%
California - Latino	20.99%	28.89%	18.43%	24.29%
Georgia - African American	52.16%	51.93%	14.99%	19.32%
Georgia - Latino	1.37%	1.80%	1.18%	1.88%
Illinois - African American	33.99%	31.51%	6.05%	5.66%
Illinois - Latino	11.55%	15.29%	3.20%	4.51%
Maryland - African American	50.91%	52.15%	15.23%	18.48%
Maryland - Latino	0.95%	1.07%	1.83%	3.15%
Michigan - African American	43.07%	45.94%	3.89%	4.38%
Michigan - Latino	2.87%	3.81%	1.47%	1.67%
Minnesota - African American	4.93%	7.28%	0.49%	1.03%
Minnesota - Latino	1.60%	2.35%	0.63%	0.93%
New Jersey - African American	33.87%	35.49%	8.75%	8.62%
New Jersey - Latino	17.29%	27.98%	4.91%	6.24%
Pennsylvania - African American	26.68%	27.83%	3.19%	3.40%
Pennsylvania - Latino	3.32%	5.38%	0.67%	0.93%
Texas - African American	17.67%	16.52%	5.39%	6.78%
Texas - Latino	26.83%	32.44%	13.78%	18.07%
USA - African American	22.19%	21.35%	6.00%	6.76%
USA - Latino	10.83%	14.79%	5.36%	7.56%

Source: United States Census, 1980 and 1990.

Suburbanization, by creating a physical separation between African American urban and White suburban populations, has propelled White, middle class, suburban populations to

electoral domination in state politics. Many observers and scholars consider suburbs to be politically apathetic places where private life dominates and civic life is nearly non-existent (Duany and Plater-Zybeck 1991). Wood (1959) termed this the "vacuum model of suburban politics" caused by the economic and racial homogeneity of suburban populations, the lack of political conflict, and the dearth of social problems. We believe this suburbanization has fueled the national shift to conservatism. In example, in three of our case study states, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota, conservative governors were elected by large suburban votes.

### **Racial Segregation**

A major consequence of suburbanization is further segregation by race and income. In the previous era rich and poor lived in separate neighborhoods within a municipality, but today they are separated by municipal boundaries (Massey and Eggars 1993). Segregation is due in part to the desire to create racially and economically homogeneous communities. Many of the first suburban municipalities were created by the middle and upper classes to avoid the corrupt and inefficient big city governments (Teaford 1979). Economic segregation persists, and suburbs continue to use zoning laws and building codes to exclude low-income people from moving into their towns (Plotkin 1991). By 1970, patterns of racial segregation created predominantly African American central cities surrounded by largely White suburbs. Although, as previously stated, there has been some African American suburbanization, the African American suburbs, such as Camden, New Jersey, considered a suburb of Philadelphia, are "simply poor, declining cities that happen to be located outside the city limits" (Massey and Denton 1993, 69).

Residential segregation has been the principle cause of the problems facing urban African Americans (Massey and Denton 1993). This is a worsening problem (Immergluck 1998). Nationally, residential segregation declined from 1970 to 1990, but many older, northeastern and midwestern cities remain highly segregated (Farley and Frey 1994). Jargowsky (1993) found that African American ghettos (urban census tracts with poor, African Americans at the fortieth percentile or higher) increased thirty-six percent between 1980 and 1990, and the physical size of ghettos expanded as well. Ghetto expansion is caused by metropolitan labor markets that move jobs to the suburbs and residential settlement patterns that enable the middle class to move to the suburbs. African Americans thus remain the most segregated racial group in the United States

(Frey and Farley 1996). The socioeconomic problems facing inner city African Americans have been closely linked to their segregation and spatial isolation (Immergluck 1998). According to Massey and Denton, African American ghettos are responsible for the perpetuation of African American poverty (1993).

Ghettos are the result of "well-defined institutional practices, private behaviors, and public policies by which Whites sought to contain growing urban Black populations" (Massey and Denton 1993, 10). Anti-African American sentiment among Whites remains salient. For the most part, Whites have been unwilling to tolerate a high percentage of African Americans in their neighborhoods (Massey and Denton 1993, 109). Racial prejudice has therefore shaped geographic patterns of growth. White flight from the cities was partially the result of the quest for a suburban home, safe neighborhoods and good schools, but racism is also a significant reason. Often "good neighborhoods" and "good schools" are thinly veiled racist statements that really mean "White neighborhoods" and "White schools."

There are, of course, regional differences in segregation. In the Northeast and Midwest there are few African Americans in towns or rural areas, whereas there are many African Americans in rural areas of the South and Latinos are prevalent in southwestern towns (Rusk 1995). Smaller jurisdictions are typically organized to promote and protect uniformity rather than diversity (Rusk 1995). This truism also applies to school districts which are more integrated in the South than in the North and Midwest.

### **School Segregation**

School segregation mirrors residential segregation. Hochschild (1985) points out that the most progress toward desegregation was made between 1968 and 1972 with no progress since 1976. Schools in large central cities remain segregated and poor. Northeastern and midwestern cities are characterized by shrinking urban school systems bordered by multiple suburban districts. Racial isolation has been more pronounced in the North where half of all African American students, as compared with one quarter in the South, have attended schools whose populations were mostly made up of minorities (Hochschild 1985). Residential segregation of African Americans and Whites has perpetuated a system of separate public schools in the North and Midwest. Orfield, found that "Schools are the first indicator and the most powerful perpetuator of regional polarization, but this polarization ultimately begins and ends in regional

housing markets” (1997, 54). Public schools are more integrated in the South where large urban systems have been integrated by court-ordered desegregation plans, and districts are countywide thus linking the cities and suburbs (Rusk 1995).

### **Reform Movements**

The history of public education is a history of racial politics. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision, in which the United States Supreme Court stated that separate was equal, shaped public education for over half a century. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) overturned *Plessy*, finding that separate was *unequal* and began an era of hopes of ending segregated schooling and providing equal education to African Americans. In 1980, however, sixty-three percent of all African American children were still attending predominantly minority schools and nationally schools had become more segregated since the *Brown* decision (Orfield 1982).

Since the turn of the century education reform movements have been devoted to pursuing one of two ideals often thought to be in conflict, excellence and equality. Prior to the 1960s, the school reform movements were more effective in creating a two-tiered model of public education than in generalizing excellence across school systems. Then, in the 1960s and 70s, in response to the *Brown* decision, the federal government established broader equity goals for standards to reach a larger segment of the population. The egalitarian movement of the 60s and 70s challenged the status quo and fought to make equality the standard for school performance (Bastian et al 1986). It fought for racial desegregation and improvement of inner city schools, universal access to public education, and reformed systems of school governance. The movement produced landmark legislation such as the Vocational Education Act of 1963, the Economic Opportunities Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as well as bilingual education acts. The education title acts created programs to redress inequities in the school system. However, while these reforms extended inclusion, they also maintained meritocratic structures and failed to transform education (Gittell 1980). In short, the reform era shifted the system of public education from an "exclusive meritocracy" to an "inclusive meritocracy" (Bastian et al 1986, 8).

## **Excellence Versus Equity**

In the 1990s “excellence” became the byword when discussing education reform, while equity fell out of favor. This is reflected in the current emphasis on educational standards. Each of the nine states in this study passed statewide academic standards. These states use standardized test scores to identify schools where students are not learning the expected material. At the time of our research, five of the states, California, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania, were just beginning to implement new academic requirements. In 1998, for the first time ever, students in Minnesota took a standardized test. Texas has the strongest standards movement, and students are required to pass a statewide test in order to graduate. The Texas testing system is two-tiered, with a test at tenth grade demonstrating high school proficiency and another at twelfth grade test for college placement and school assessment. In Texas, a school with low scores can lose its state accreditation or suffer financial sanctions. New Jersey also requires proficiency tests for graduation while Minnesota and Maryland have planned to do so. In Maryland, under-performing schools could be subject to governance reform. Other states, meanwhile, reward high test scores with financial bonuses or other incentives.

Critics have found these standardized tests punish the children most in peril. As there is a strong correlation between low test scores and racial minority classification, some call the tests racist (Keleher et al 1999). The implementation of a standards law is difficult for schools that usually produce low scores in the new program (Olson 1999). Texas ameliorated this problem by making the standards lower at first and then raising the bar each year. Still, there was a lawsuit (ultimately unsuccessful) against the tests on the basis that minorities are not prepared for them (Zehr 1999b). In 1999, after a five-year study, a presidential panel, the President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, found high-stakes tests were unfair to Latinos (Zehr 1999a).

Critics of statewide standards also charge that teachers adapt by teaching the test, devoting valuable time towards a questionable goal. Parents in Michigan, mostly in the suburbs of Detroit, consider the proficiency test to be unfair and continue to boycott the tests. Parents refused to let their children take the test in 1997, and again (though on a smaller scale) in 1998 (Viadero 1999).

The transformation of America into a suburban nation has taken a great toll on our cities, our politics, and the national and state policy debates, specifically on education. The racial

segregation resultant from White flight is mirrored in our schools. The poverty left in the wake of these fleeing urban masses is often reflected in suburban vs. urban school inequities leaving little hope of or chance for equality or excellence.

## **POLITICAL CULTURE AND EDUCATION**

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### **Political Culture in State Politics**

Political culture, as previously stated, is a set of attitudes towards government and governmental actors and beliefs about the role of citizens in the public sector. Evidence of these beliefs can be found in institutions and political behaviors. While none of the fifty states are entirely homogenous and monolithic, distinct cultures are apparent between the states. According to the history, economy, geography, and demographics of each state, there might be fifty different political cultures (Patterson 1968). For example, Oklahoma was uniquely affected by the dustbowl conditions of the 1930s, Texas is home to the oil industry, and Minnesota has a high number of immigrants and their descendents from the Scandinavian countries. Each of these states has a unique political culture as a result of these circumstances. Using the regional politics of the South as the context for his study, V. O. Key wrote the most important analysis of state political culture (Key 1949). Although race was an overriding influence on the political values and behavior in all of the states, Key analyzed the distinctive political attributes of each state which, in turn, guide public policies. Thus, one can conclude the political culture of a state constrains its policy agenda, and states establish public institutions according to cultural beliefs that have varying capacities to solve social problems.

While all nine states have similar policy interests and regime structures, they are unique in many ways. Each state developed different responses to demands for finance reform and charter schools. Another school policy, the employment (or decision not to employ) high-stakes testing, was dealt with differently by each state. An explanation for why states facing similar challenges dealt with them in different ways can be found in each state's unique political culture. In this section of our study we look at the political cultures of the nine states, demonstrating the importance of political culture to education policy.

Studies of political culture in the states have been dominated by the theory of Daniel Elazar who identified three basic attitudes or beliefs that originated on the eastern seaboard and migrated west (Elazar 1984). In New England, Elazar found a "moralistic" political culture that values public service and governmental solutions to social problems. The Mid-Atlantic states are dominated by an "individualistic," more laissez faire culture that uses government to protect economic growth. In the South, a "traditionalistic" culture that is elitist and anti-government

reinforces a non-participatory system of limited government. Elazar, in providing a framework for analyzing differential state behavior, gave each state one of these descriptive labels according to the dominant strain in its political culture.

Elazar's model, though oft cited, does have several weaknesses. It does not allow for a peculiarly western political culture, only a mix of strains from the East. In fact, the western states have unique circumstances of economics, immigration, and natural resources that affect their political cultures (Ayers et al 1996; Limerick 2000). Several theorists have further detailed the function of geography in creating specific regions. Savoie and Higgins note the role of the American frontier in the creation of regional politics and contend: "The presence of the frontier, its nature, and the relentless way in which it was pushed steadily westward, molded the American Character and shaped American civilization. In politics and social life, the frontier - the West - was marked by a certain radicalism, which neatly counterbalance the conservatism of the East" (Higgins and Savoie 1997, 188). As for the Midwest, states located therein are purported to have "strikingly different political cultures" (Rom 1988). In addition, some have suggested that certain states such as Oklahoma may have been miscast by Elazar (Stein and Hill 1993). Furthermore, recent migrations and technological advances may render Elazar's model outdated as political culture is fluid and subject to change. For example, in the United States, recent population movements have been southward and westward, migrants bringing with them their political beliefs.

Three specific political attitudes are most important to education policy (Gittell 1986; McDonnell and McLaughlin 1982). First, some states are more "progressive" than others. These progressive states have a tradition of policy experimentation and a history of tolerance for redistributive policy. In education, such states may be more likely to address finance inequity and more aggressive in attempts to improve schools. Second, some states are more participatory and have traditions of promoting civic involvement in public questions. Other participatory states have a high voter turnout rate and/or put policy ideas to direct election. Third, some states have "localistic" cultures in which local autonomy is valued and intervention from the state capital resented. In education, state localism is a factor in the development of locally based charter schools. The nine states studied herein all exhibit varying degrees of these political characteristics.

## **California: Openly Contested Progressivism**

California is the only western state in our study, and it represents all aspects of a particularly western political culture. With its large size, varied geography, and diverse population, California shares traits with all the western states. Patricia Nelson Limerick and others posit that the west has a unique and distinct history as a region (Ayers et al 1996). The scarcity of water, the abundance of federal land and open space, the proximity of Mexico, and the presence of Mexican-Americans are some of the many differences separating the West from the East. Indeed, much of California's political culture can be attributed to these western traits. Clearly, because of federal intervention and policy-making in areas of water and resource allocation, infrastructure, and immigration, there is an increased awareness of the role of the government and its goal of protecting the public good.

Two different cultural cleavages exist between northern and southern California that often lead to regional political conflict (Wolfinger 1969). Left-leaning Democrats are most successful in the north while right-wing Republicans usually have strength in the south. The far right has been politically successful in Orange County and San Diego as have the racist and classist White business elites who have dominated policy making in Los Angeles (Davis 1992). In the north, San Francisco, a headquarters for banking, finance, and industry, is a contrast to L.A. San Francisco is described as having a tradition of pro-business, pro-economic growth policies which has allowed for occasional progressive victories (DeLeon 1992).

A second division is created by the difference between coastal and inland regions of California. The coast is urban and industrial, while inland regions are rural and agricultural. Since the 1970s, some observers have seen this division reflected in politics and culture. They note that "coastal California, the big population gainer in the 1970s, tends toward cultural liberalism. But the big growth area of the 1980s [the inland region] has attracted cultural conservatives"(Barone and Ujifusa 1994, 76). This political regionalism is not without irony: In earlier times the coast had the wealthy Republicans, while Democratic farmers and laborers lived inland.

California has more populist civic institutions than most states. These include initiative, referendum, and recall. Californians are therefore accustomed to voting approval or disapproval of both policies and politicians. The state also has a high voter turnout rate, and minority voting has been on the rise. State residents are often organized into clubs and groups and lobby on

particular issues. San Francisco is described as hyper-pluralist meaning that social diversity causes fragmentation into a multitude of specialized, small interest groups (DeLeon 1992). Amalgamations of these different groups campaign for each ballot proposition or recall effort. In short, all sides of the political spectrum are fairly well organized, although some have more resources than others. Further, Californians have comparatively open policymaking at the state level. There are sunshine laws and lobby restrictions that make the political process public. California has been deemed a strong interest group state with business and agriculture having the most influence (Syer 1987). However both Davis and DeLeon find that business domination of local governments occur within this populist tradition (1992; 1992). This leaves one to wonder if a more elitist reality lies behind the state's rhetoric and institutional arrangements.

Many scholars agree with Charles Bell that Californians are traditionally supportive of government. Bell cites the large number of initiative measures on the ballot of every election and concludes from poll data that "not only do the state's citizens voice support for most state programs, but in most cases they are also willing to spend more money on these programs" (Bell 1984, 38-39). He argues the Proposition 13 tax revolt of 1978, which repealed some property taxes, was only an expression of exasperation with politicians and not a rejection of government programs. California has produced many national progressive political leaders and quality-of-life issues run strong and sometimes win in California. Yet quality-of-life policies like environmentalism are perceived by working-class voters to decrease jobs. Therefore, there is usually political support for moderate pro-economic growth politicians who work with the business elite. Every election and policy is contested from all sides with the far right maintaining a stronghold in California.

California's central state government seems to be strongly accepted by localities. The state government is enormous, matching the size of California's population and economy. Most cities, having only councils and supervisors, do not elect an executive. State-level politicians are professional, represent large districts, and are given large budgets for research and staff (Bell 1984). Additionally, the state's large metropolitan areas are accustomed to working across city lines at the regional and state level on problems of transportation and air pollution. The political culture of professional big government thus suggests state-level policy decisions will often be implemented without incident.

This culture of “hotly contested progressivism” is evident in California education politics. California government institutions, including the education system, tend to be organized vertically by issue area. A strong tradition of commission-based government has kept education and other policy areas at arms length from local and state politicians. Local school districts are completely unconnected to the municipalities they encompass both in terms of governance and finance. Not only is there little interaction between local government and school officials, but there are few informal links through party politics as school board elections are officially nonpartisan. Also, since the passage of Proposition 13, virtually all funds for education are allocated by the state, regardless of whether they originate as local property taxes. This statewide funding plan has not necessarily helped the urban schools that have higher costs. Further, the state system of “Revenue Limit Financing” obviates the need for local school budget votes, once a focus of local organizing that induced interaction between local politicians and school officials.

The influence of conservatives from growing suburban regions and southern California is apparent in education politics, especially in the area of charter school politics. The current governor, Gray Davis (D), has the authority to place new issues on the education agenda, however, education policy-making power clearly resides within the education committee of the state senate. Additionally, the state superintendent is an elected official and not a gubernatorial appointee. At the time of our research, the California legislature reflected a tilt in power towards conservative suburbanites, and the governor (Pete Wilson) was a conservative Republican. This was not always so; in the 1970s the legislature had a Democratic majority and urban education was a priority. However, in the past fifteen years, Republicans, who tend to favor programs that benefit suburban schools, gained power in state politics. In example, in 1996 when the Republicans won a majority in the assembly, they formed a coalition with those Democrats who supported charter schools. The education committee of the state senate, however, was controlled by Democrats strongly identified with the teachers’ unions and less supportive of the charter school movement.

The open structure of policymaking in California is apparent when studying education. The education committee passed several pieces of legislation, such as charter schools, independent of the reigning coalitions. The dominant coalition is comprised of the California Federation of Teachers, the California Education Association, the California Association of

School Boards, the California Association of Superintendents, and the various professional associations. Other independent actors, such as the California State University Center for Education Reform, entered the arena on specific bills but have limited political power. Los Angeles Democrats continued to be a mainstay of the Democratic caucus, but power in the legislature, as earlier stated, has shifted toward the rural and suburban areas. The suburban swing districts, like the assembly district encompassing Pasadena that recently turned Democratic, have become the focus of both parties and therefore pushed the agenda in a suburban direction. Many cities have lost a voice within the caucus as their reliably Democratic districts can no longer outlast the others and move into leadership in an era of term limits.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the open structure of California politics allowed business to influence the expansion of charter laws.

In sum, California's political culture is a one of centralized contested progressivism, influenced (like many other states) by suburbanization. This culture is clearly reflected in the education policy set forth by the state.

### **Georgia: Limited Government**

Georgia has a centralistic culture that is neither populist nor progressive. Many Georgians hold a belief in minimal government. This is a state of the Deep South with a history of the elite-ruled, one-party politics (Key 1949). Yet there has been some departure from tradition as recent statewide elections have had candidates from both parties running competitively and closely (Barone and Ujifusa 1994). Typically, leading Democrats are moderate to conservative, and winning Republicans are not from the far right. Perhaps election results are so close because candidates are saying the same thing. Indeed, many observers concur that Georgia has a climate of "consensus politics." Politicians and voters, for at least twenty years, have agreed that government should focus on economic development policy. Atlanta is reflective of this stance as it has experienced tremendous growth, became a capital of the South, and a major American city. This growth, however, is not without its critics.

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<sup>1</sup>Under the new term limit law, all legislators are limited to two four-year terms. Term limits have increased the importance of leadership-raised funds, but it is not clear what impact the new contribution limits will have on sources of funds. The state has weak campaign contribution limits, but just passed two initiatives that will dramatically tighten them. Both of the initiatives would greatly increase the need for strong organizations and for candidates to establish name recognition prior to running.

According to some sources, many new jobs have gone to White outsiders causing African American populations to miss out on economic development (Orfield and Ashkinaze 1991). Yet the consensus about these policy goals still holds. Stone's study of Atlanta describes the African American middle class as having had minimal engagement in decision making with the business elite (Stone 1989). Thus, while experiencing two party politics, economic growth consensus still dominates.

Amidst all this agreement, there are a few political cleavages. Economically and geographically, the state is usually divided into three zones. Southern Georgia is rural, agricultural, and forested. Residents in these parts are likely Southern Democrats or non-voters. In central Georgia we find the industrial cities of Atlanta, Macon, and Columbus whose economic growth has attracted an influx of outsiders. Both parties are competitive in these metropolitan areas, and conservative Republicans as well as a few liberal Democrats may be found here. Rural sections of central Georgia include the cotton-growing region of the old South. The north is an Appalachian mountain area where the White rural citizens vote Republican in the anti-slavery, anti-Southern Democrat tradition of Lincoln. The political cleavages are not necessarily along rural and urban lines as metropolitan Atlanta does not vote much differently from the rest of the state according to one aggregate analysis (Barone and Ujifusa 1994).

Differences in voting patterns along racial lines do exist with African Americans strongly affiliating with the Democratic party and Republicans appealing to some White cultural conservatism. Resultant is that the African American vote, organized since the civil rights movement, is important to any election and courted by all Democrats that run statewide. Notably, Maynard Jackson's election as the first African American mayor of Atlanta is not attributed to white progressivism, but instead is due "to their [Whites] departure from the city in large numbers" (Rutheiser 1996, 62). However, when Andrew Young, the former African American mayor of Atlanta, ran for governor in 1990 race was not an issue (Interview 1992). Cleavages notwithstanding, in popular rhetoric Georgia is proud of modernizing and overcoming racial hatred.

Georgia also has a non-participatory political culture. Voting rates in Georgia are consistently low, and many citizens have few expectations about participating in politics and government. The non-participants, mostly rural, avoid exercising their civic rights and the shun

corresponding responsibility. For example, they have feared being called to jury duty should they register to vote (Hepburn 1984). Resultant is that the strongest and most active interest groups that influence legislation are business related.

Progressive or post-material politics are not accepted in Georgia. Liberalism is anathema, and politicians whose opponents can label them “liberal” are usually doomed to defeat. Private property is broadly protected from regulation. One observer notes, “this opposition [to regulation] extends to building codes, leash laws, and noise ordinances. It wells up at the mention of zoning, that in some rural counties is viewed as a form of socialism” (Hepburn 1984, 182). As has been noted, the state and even the cities are devoted to economic growth.

Interestingly, education, targeted for improvement and increased spending, may be an exception to the typical focus on laissez-faire economic development. Since the sixties, governors “have supported increased public spending for public education but have avoided class politics while championing economic development” (Interview 1992). Any other major spending programs have come from federal grants or federal insistence such as improvements in public transportation and solid waste disposal.

Georgia’s state government is relatively weak and reluctant to pass sweeping legislation without strong support from the governor. This has contributed to the passage of weak charter school legislation. In fact, Georgia’s first charter school legislation is considered among the weakest and most restrictive of all states. New charters required many approvals; resultant was the establishment of very few new schools. At the time of our study only twenty-eight charter schools were set up in the state. Georgia’s tradition of small government, slow change, and limited participation is thus reflected in its school reform efforts.

Overall, education politics in Georgia and Atlanta are not very participatory (Gittell 1980). In one instance, a single legislator was able to impose his personal preferences in charter policy. Legislation was initiated in the 1997 session by Sen. Clay Land (R) that would strengthen charter schools by allowing any private individual, private organization, or university to establish a charter school. This bill was subsequently quashed largely due to the efforts of Speaker Thomas B. Murphy. He is said to be a great personal ally of the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), the second largest union in the state and a branch of the NEA. He has openly stated that no charter school bill will have a hearing in the House while he is the Speaker

(Interview 1997). This legislative example and the foregoing analysis evince that Georgia's centralistic, non-participatory culture of limited government is reflected in its education policy (Cumming 1997).

### **Illinois: A Microcosm of American Political Culture**

Illinois has been called a microcosm of the United States; its diversity prevents a general characterization of its political culture. It contains the third largest city in the nation as well as smaller cities, towns, and farmlands. In terms of economics, Illinois has succeeded as a marketplace where monetary freedom is guaranteed. On this point, regarding its largest city, one source reports, "Chicago was established not by government but by markets; it has always been a free enterprise city..." (Barone and Ujifusa 1994, 380). The facilitated rise of industry and transportation produced a backlash of labor politics, government regulation, and populist farmers. Consequently business groups are influential, and pro-marketplace policies are the norm.

The northern half of the state is traditionally Republican, except for central Chicago, and the southern half of the state is Democratic. There are industrial cities, such as Springfield and East St. Louis, spread throughout the state. Resultant is that Chicago is not the singular focus of anti-urban sentiment. In several counties in central Illinois, over ten percent of residents are African American, and in two counties in southern Illinois over twenty-five percent of residents are African American (Kleppner 1988). The only large Latino population, however, is found in the Chicago area. Agricultural regions are spread throughout the state, often along the Mississippi, Ohio, Wabash, and Illinois Rivers.

Illinois history is peppered with populist movements. The labor movement of the 1930s was strong in Illinois. Chicago and the rest of Illinois have been the center of a political advocacy movement based on community organization. Chicagoan Saul Alinsky developed a successful model of community organization in neighborhoods that is emulated and continued (Joravsky 1990). Organizing as an activity to demand attention from government has spread throughout the state. One writer exclaims, "community organizations have put down roots in the last fifteen years in the state's economically troubled farmlands and mid-sized cities" (Frank 1990, 72). The populist tradition also extends to the farmers of Illinois. Overall, strong party-based politics, growing out of machines, have increased voter turnout with statewide

elections often close between the two parties. Governor Edgar first took office in 1990 with fifty-one percent of the vote. In short, Illinois' diversity leads its officials to enact a panoply of policies; it is neither particularly progressive, nor very anti-government.

The politics behind the various Chicago school reform efforts are certainly representative of the state's pluralism and the influence of Chicago mayors in state policy making. School activists, business organizations, the Chicago mayor, and foundations were all part of the extensive Chicago education reform process in 1988 (Gittell 1994). The subsequent school reform of 1995 included the same cast of characters. Chicago city actors participate more directly in Illinois state politics building on the tradition of strong mayors like the first Daley. Illinois' pro-business tradition is evident in the state government's responsiveness to their interests. In addition, our interviews revealed that the Democratic political machine of Chicago still influences education politics as the mayor asserts his authority over the budget. One interviewee observed that the principalships can be important patronage jobs for the mayor to assign (Interview 1999). Perhaps not coincidentally, the current Mayor Daley regained some control of the hiring of school principals under the 1995 school reform. Clearly both the tradition of populism and historic Chicago Democratic machine politics are influential in contemporary Illinois political culture and thus, education policy.

### **Maryland: Emerging Progressivity**

Maryland, also not very participatory with a centralistic tradition, has become more politically progressive in the last two decades. For example, in a 1989 poll of Maryland residents of voting age asked about budget constraints on government programs, slightly more respondents favored raising taxes over reducing services (IRSS 1989). Marylanders favor government intervention on behalf of economic growth, business, and jobs. The city of Baltimore followed these policies during the 1980s and redeveloped a downtown harbor tourist shopping area at great expense while it continued to experience high rates of poverty and crime. The state has a diverse economy that offers a variety of jobs that include: 27% service-related, 26% in trade, 18.6% in government, and 10.4% in manufacturing (Lippincott and Thomas 1993). Maryland's high number of government workers may, in part, explain the population's great appreciation for government programs and the state's provision of a high level of government services. The state allows legislative items to be submitted for referendum, and citizens often

take advantage of this opportunity. Progressivity is evidenced by recent voter approval of gun control and abortion rights legislation. Moreover, there has been a major environmental movement focused on the Chesapeake Bay, polluted during recent periods of economic growth and urban/suburban sprawl. The African-American vote was well organized during the civil rights movement, and continues to be an influential force in elections (McDougall 1993). The current governor, Glendening, is perhaps the most liberal of Maryland's executive leaders.

Baltimore is the cultural center for the state and the city from which most of the leading statewide politicians hail. State politics are overwhelmingly Democratic except, on occasion, at the presidential level. The Washington D.C. suburbs are very liberal and Democratic among African Americans and Whites. Conversely, the rural areas in western Maryland and the Eastern Shore are usually Republican. Meanwhile, the Baltimore metropolitan area often splits racially (and correspondingly urban/suburban), with Republican Whites and Democratic African Americans (Barone and Ujifusa 1994). Baltimore experienced tremendous White flight during the 1970s; left behind, in the wake of the suburban exodus, was a poor central city. By 1980 the city had an African American majority (sixty percent) while the White suburbs had expanded considerably (McDougall 1993). Fifteen percent of all Maryland residents live in Baltimore, while sixty-five percent live in suburbs of Baltimore or Washington. In 1999, at twenty-eight percent of the state population, Maryland has the most African-American residents outside of the deep South or the District of Columbia (U.S. Census 1999).

The politics behind education finance reform reflect contemporary Maryland's politics overall. Maryland was the first state in our study that resolved its lawsuits over funding; it appropriated more money for the troubled urban district in 1996. Initially, the Maryland legislature created a Baltimore School Funding Bill in May of that year. Because this legislation was limited and provided for state takeovers with no local control, Mayor Schmoke convinced Governor Glendening to veto the legislation (Waldron and Jensen 1996). In the end, the state and the city worked out a deal for finance and governance in which Baltimore would receive \$254 million in extra state aid over five years. Under the new education plan, the reconstituted schools are managed under joint powers whereby Mayor Schmoke and Governor Glendening together appoint the special new board of directors. In exchange, the mayor agreed to end both lawsuits (Miller 1998). The story of this legislation confirms two ideas: First, that Maryland politics are responsive to pleas for greater equity. Second, Baltimore has a strong position in

Maryland politics in which cooperative relations are enjoyed (Orr 1999). However, the history of Baltimore's segregated political culture keeps community activists divided. Orr has confirmed this: "[I]n the context of a declining central city such control [by African Americans over the school system] is increasingly dependent on resources not under their command. The need for activating inter-group social capital is questionable" (1999, 192).

### **Michigan: Participatory White Retrenchment**

Michigan has a progressive tradition, especially if its economy is booming. However, in contrast to Maryland, this state has become less progressive. For much of its history Michigan has been quite wealthy as compared to other states. Because it has been dominated by the manufacturing of durable goods such as furniture and automobiles, Michigan's economy is accustomed to boom-and-bust industrial cycles. When business and the economy have been good, tax revenues have funded expanding social programs. In example, Michigan had a generous poor-relief program, General Assistance, that supplemented federal AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). During times of economic downturn, however, government programs have been cut. The state is expected to bail out industry and assist with economic transition. Governors and state legislators, until recently, were quite moderate. The electoral winds began to shift with a long and severe recession that occurred during the early 1980s (Press 1986). Michigan voters responded and became more pessimistic. Correspondingly, throughout the 1980s social services and state spending were cut, and, in a 1992 budget battle, General Assistance was completely eliminated. Thus, it would appear that government programs are welcome only when industry revenue can pay for them as individual Michigan families are unwilling to foot the bill.

Political cleavages in the state are usually defined along rural/urban lines putting Detroit and southeastern Michigan in conflict with the rest of the state. The city of Detroit has a large African-American population and, depending on the state of the economy, often has large numbers of people qualifying for poor relief. Postwar African-American migration to Detroit from the South caused the flight of Whites, industry, and capital to the suburbs and other cities (Hula et al. 1994). However, although some of them remain White and very affluent, the suburban counties surrounding Detroit are increasingly African American (Darden et al 1987).

The Detroit region is thus easily vilified as it receives most of the state's money and attention and because of the strong racial cleavages in politics.

Michigan also has a populist tradition. The state constitution allows the undertaking of ballot initiatives and recall elections. Interest group politics are extensive with many different citizen groups demonstrating in Lansing (the state capitol) on different issues. One analysis reports, "Michigan's citizenry has a tradition of being attentive to policy events and following them from a variety of perspectives. When sizable minorities believe that state officials are unresponsive to their needs, or simply to their preferences, they often raise havoc in Lansing" (Browne and VerBerg 1995, 22).

In education policy, we found examples of this tradition of citizen participation as well as the state's trends of tax reduction and anti-urbanism. In 1968, Gittell and Hollander considered Detroit a highly participatory city in the development of school policy (Gittell and Hollander 1968). Michigan is the only state in our study that passed major education finance reform, fulfilled by Governor Engler's promise of tax relief. One observer notes "The Michigan Public School Academy Act of 1993 (PA 362), when considered with the school finance reform passed as a companion bill, set in motion the most far-reaching, egalitarian restructuring of public education in any state in the latter half of the twentieth century" (Vitullo-Martin 1998, 115). This was accomplished through the lowering of property taxes while other taxes on sales, tobacco, business property and others were raised (Vitullo-Martin 1998).

This school finance policy of statewide funding may seem more equitable than local-based funding, but a funding plan based upon sales taxes can be regressive and inequitable. In addition, the new funding plan does not include money for capital projects like building improvement, but the state will guarantee local discounted bond issues. This means that the poorest districts, that have the buildings in the worst condition, cannot afford renovation. The Michigan Education Association (MEA) is the "most powerful" and "by a large margin the wealthiest PAC [political action committee]" in the state (Vitullo-Martin 1998, 116). The MEA charges that improvements in equity have not been forthcoming and that existing funding was simply "put into concrete" (Interview 1997). Moreover, because revenues from a sales tax are much less stable than those from a property tax, this plan could easily fall prey to economic downturns. Since other districts could raise property taxes to make up the difference, without exceeding a cap, this was also unfair for poorer districts such as Detroit (Interview 1997).

Notably, Detroit's K-12 enrollment was ninety percent African-American in 1995-96, and its "total capital needs [were] estimated at \$3 billion" (Johnston 1998b). Detroit passed a bond issue in 1994, but projects have been held up by state reviews. Counties, rather than districts, may also vote to raise extra mill levies for schools under the law, but Detroit could never convince greater Wayne County to raise property taxes. The overall result of the bill has been that the wealthiest school districts, those in the suburbs, have been limited while the rural areas, which have very low property values, have been helped the most. Resultant is that despite having the lowest test scores and decades-long problems, funding to Detroit has remained the same.

Michigan enacted a charter school law after a failed effort by the governor to pass voucher legislation. Suburban resistance to vouchers, explained below, exemplifies the tradition of anti-urban bias. The governor wanted vouchers but realized he could not fight the unions and surmount a skeptical public. In 1995 the governor proposed school choice - that all public school districts have open enrollment. This was defeated by Democrats and legislators from the suburbs, suburbs with the better schools. One newspaper wrote that suburban Republicans "often confuse choice with the forced busing threats of the 1960s and 70s" (Bray 1995, n.p.). The obvious conclusion is that the suburbs created by 1960s White flight fear the urban (read African American) students. While the proposal did not include any provision for transportation, Republican legislators "from suburban districts close to large urban areas, read that Grosse Pointe, Birmingham, Farmington, Southfield, etc., -- are getting heat from thorny constituents who don't trust politicians who promise they won't ever bus kids across district lines once they have [the legislation] up and running" (Waldmeir 1995, n.p.). A Michigan Education Association representative said the same thing about the original voucher proposals: "choice fell because the wealthy White Republican districts wanted to opt out of the state school system" (Interview 1997). In essence, those with the best schools would like to keep them, and free-market choice policy fell to protectionism. Participatory White entrenchment indeed.

### **Minnesota: Experimental Suburbanites**

Minnesota has a highly participatory political culture and a tradition of being a high-tax, high-service state. It has been dominated by the politically liberal Democrat-Farmer-Labor Party wielding influence and power in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and St. Louis County, "a large area in the

northeastern corner of the state that includes the port city of Duluth and the Iron Range, home of the iron mining industry (Elazar et al 1999, 71). For much of its history, Minnesota's residents have been Scandinavian immigrants and their descendants who have supported "cooperative activity and bureaucratic socialism" (Barone and Ujifusa 1994, 679). Recently, however, the state's participatory culture has made it possible for conservatives to gain power. Republican Governor Carlson, although not from the far right and pro-choice on abortion, often made concessions to the more extreme conservatives that had captured his party. Then in 1998, an independent candidate with some conservative views, Jesse Ventura, captured the governor's office. Ventura further exemplifies the inclusive and participatory nature of politics in Minnesota. Beyond the governor's office, another manifestation of Minnesota's tradition of policy activism can be seen in the willingness of legislators to tinker with existing welfare and education policies; Minnesota reduced welfare programs and passed an educational choice plan. Amidst all these conservative tendencies, Minnesota's legislature passed a health care plan that raised taxes and covered the uninsured.

Minnesota's suburbs have experienced tremendous growth, a phenomenon that cannot be attributed to racism as in other states. This is because the state has so few minority residents; Minnesota's population is ninety-five percent White (Barone and Ujifusa 1994). Geopolitically, southeast Minnesota is considered more conservative. Republicans also do well in wealthier suburbs of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Our education research found evidence supportive of this picture of Minnesota's political culture. The state has a history of producing a highly educated workforce with good schools and extensive higher education, and it was one of the first states willing to experiment with education reform. The state's journey toward charter schools began in 1985 with a plan for "post-secondary enrollment." This means high school aged students could enroll in free college courses for credit. The program continues today. This is essentially a subsidy for classes taken outside the licensed secondary schools. Private colleges are not included, though this has been proposed. In 1988 Minnesota moved to allow open enrollment of students across districts with some limitations. For example, a school district could claim to be at full capacity and deny enrollment to a student from another district. Minnesota's was "the first mandatory school-choice program in the nation" (Elazar 1999, 177). This experimental attitude towards education

reform (however conservative in cast it may be) is resultant from the state's collective progressive mentality that searches for government solutions to public problems.

Minnesota's pioneering experimentation is evident in its passage of the nation's first state charter school law in 1991. In fact, the charter school concept originated with Joe Naciona a professor at the University of Minnesota. Compared to other states the Minnesota law is strong, but charter school advocates within Minnesota are not yet satisfied (Minnesota Charter Schools Coalition 1997). Further, the subsequent 1997 omnibus education bill included a major expansion of the original charter law. The cap on the number of schools was lifted permitting a potentially unlimited number of charters. At the time of our research Minnesota was the only state to allow private colleges and universities to start a charter school, thus permitting public funds to go to private institutions. Since that time, several other states have adopted similar policies. In addition, the state now provides some categorical funds for up to eighty percent of a charter school's building and facility costs. As of December 1997, twenty-five charter schools were operating in Minnesota with six more approved and ten in development. Statewide, there were approximately 2000 students enrolled in charter schools. Nonprofits such as the Urban League and ACORN operate some charter schools in St. Paul. Most of the other charter schools are in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, but there are others scattered throughout the state. Charters schools have been cast as a "slow but unqualified success" (Elazar 1999, 177).

Minnesotans agree that school reform experimentation is consistent with their history of progressivism. A representative from the school board association stated, "education is about ideas, not the suppression of ideas" (Interview 1997). The representative felt that after an experiment good policies should be kept and bad ones discarded. The pro-charter organizations have tried to demonstrate the effectiveness of the policy while others have declared it a failure. It is notable that the charter law was sold to the public as a progressive measure that would, in theory, help the most desperate students. In practice, the charter schools created in Minnesota do primarily serve the most needy students with supporters of charter schools often emphasizing this fact. According to the governor's office, one-third of the charter schools serve "at-risk" children, and these are the types of charters that local school boards are most likely to approve (Interview 1997). Six out of seven of the charter schools to be approved by the state board are in urban areas with many intended to serve "at-risk" students (Monsour 1998).

Thus, traditions of progressivism and populism combine in Minnesota to fuel experiments with education reform. The reforms, some conservative, are atypical from that in many other states because of their disassociation with apparent racial motives. While the nature, value, and success of the Minnesota's reforms are debatable, their overall design to help at-risk children is not.

### **New Jersey: Exemplary Localism**

New Jersey is a predominantly suburban state with a corresponding suburban political culture concerned with quality-of-life issues, the reason many of its residents fled large cities (Salmore and Salmore 1993). Voters want good schools, low taxes, low crime, and high property values. It is also a state that lacks a major city to provide a center and a focus for media and culture. In example, political campaigns purchase advertisements on New York and Philadelphia broadcast stations. The state also lacks one leading, widely read newspaper. In short, the state is neither very populist nor often progressive, but it is very localistic.

Interestingly, while the state is politically dominated by the suburbs, it is one of the most urban states in the nation. There are extremes of wealth and poverty, and the battle over school funding reflects the suburban rich/urban poor dichotomy. New Jersey was found to contain four of the eleven most distressed cities in the United States (Lindsay 1998). Camden, where half of the children live in poverty, has the nation's fifth highest poverty rate. New Jersey schools are also among the most segregated: minorities almost exclusively attend city schools while Whites fill suburban schools. For example, in the 1995-96 school year, out of a total enrollment of 628, there were only three White children in Newark's pre-kindergarten program (Lindsay 1998).

Overall, New Jersey is diverse and as earlier stated, locally oriented. Its population includes a high percentage of minorities, including African Americans and Latinos. Residents settle in neighborhoods and towns ethnically friendly to them resulting in a factitious state culture. New Jersey citizens were found to express more enthusiasm for local governments than for the state government (Moakley 1993). It was also found that New Jersey residents could identify politicians from other states more easily than those from their own. However given the statewide tax revolt of 1990, as well as the elections of 1991 and 1993 in which the state unified against Governor Florio, this may be changing. Also, Governor Whitman gained national attention as a moderate Republican with national political aspirations. These aspirations were

realized in her appointment to head the United States Environmental Protection Agency under President George W. Bush. Popular issue-based convergence and national attention could forge more of a statewide identity.

Voter turnout rates are low in the state; New Jersey ranks thirty-third in a survey of states' electoral activity between 1994 and 1997 (Gray et al 1999). Historically, New Jersey was run by machine politics and there was significant corruption. The corruption was most prevalent in the cities, particularly in those that were impoverished. In recent years, due to the public financing of gubernatorial campaigns, New Jersey politicians are becoming known statewide through television advertisements.

Notably, the public has the capacity to influence policy but rarely chooses to do so. Resultant is a minimally obtrusive state government passing new programs only when demanded by public opinion. For example, in 1994 after a high-profile case of child sexual abuse and murder prompted public outcry, Megan's Law requiring public notification about convicted sex offenders went into effect. Similarly, Governor Florio's 1990 sales and income tax increases, intended to strive toward greater equity in school funding as the state courts dictated, mobilized a public opinion forcing the dilution of the proposal. Florio and statehouse Democrats also lost their seats as a result of the tax revolt. Moakley, in 1984, did not consider New Jersey to be an interest group state. More contemporary analysis, however, has found New Jersey interest groups classified as complementary. That is groups "tend to work in conjunction with or are constrained by other aspects of the political system" (Thomas and Hrebennar 1999, 137).

New Jersey's suburban character, with its many voters who are highly educated professionals seeking to improve their quality of life, lends the state a degree of progressivism in certain areas. New Jersey elections therefore revolve around quality-of-life issues *as suburban residents understand it*: environmental protection, steadfastness against crime, and good local schools that will help their children achieve (Salmore and Salmore 1993). Programs are supported to produce widespread benefits and businesslike exchange of fees for services are expected. New Jerseyans continue to punish politicians because of taxes. A Star-Ledger/Eagleton poll concluded that Governor Whitman received her lowest positive job performance rating from those who said their property taxes increased significantly (27%), compared to those who said they went up a little (61%), or have stayed the same (65%) (National

Network of State Polls 1997). The suburban preoccupation over tax rates clearly limits the progressivism of the state's politics.

The long conflict over school finance reform in New Jersey is an example of the state's localized, suburban culture. The state refused to assist urban areas by providing a funding scheme which would bring urban school budgets to the same high levels as those of suburban schools. In New Jersey, the courts and the politicians argued for decades over defining finance equity as the concept of equity was strongly resisted by politicians and the public. Finally, in 1998, the state supreme court "affirmed earlier rulings that ordered the state to assure that the 28 urban districts involved in the court case spend as much per pupil as the state's highest-spending suburbs" (Hendrie 1998). Clearly, most of the individual districts in New Jersey, being suburban and relatively wealthy, are protective of their schools. They are unwilling to assist the urban areas within the state. Further, charter schools are succeeding in New Jersey as a localized, suburban school reform that rewards entrepreneurship and market allocations. The dominance of suburbs and the prevailing anti-city culture drive the debate and prevent urban school reform from receiving attention from the policy agenda, state government, and community organizations.

### **Pennsylvania: Economic Liberalism**

The dominant political stance in Pennsylvania may be described as a rare combination of cultural conservatism and economic liberalism. It is localistic, moderately participatory, and occasionally progressive. For example, former Democratic Governor Bob Casey initiated many expensive projects that could be termed progressive, e.g., environmental cleanup, but he was pro-life on abortion. Indeed, Pennsylvania anti-abortion groups are well-organized, national leaders of cultural conservatism. Meanwhile, at the time of our research, half of the state budget was allocated to education, and during a monetary crisis in 1991, basic education received its largest increase in funding ever in a demonstration of fiscal liberalism (Crotty 1993). Nonetheless, we believe we have witnessed a reversal of Pennsylvania's social liberal tradition. In fact, in the spring of 1998, the state legislature refused to bail out the city of Philadelphia which had accrued a sizable budget deficit.

Pennsylvania is a diverse state where election results can wildly swing either direction. For instance, in a special U.S. Senate race in 1991 the state elected a liberal Democrat over a

well-known former governor only to replace him three years later with a far-right Republican. Historically, strong political party organization is characteristic of Pennsylvania. For many decades, and even today in some areas, the strong party system assisted a closed machine-style of politics and effectively shut out challengers to established power (Nossiff 1995). While localities might be dominated by a single party machine, statewide elections usually have been very close. At the time of our research, the victories of Republican Governor Ridge and Senator Santorum, as well as GOP control of both houses of the state legislature, evidenced a continuing trend of increasing Republican strength.

In general, state policy has followed a corporate-friendly tradition of attracting jobs and development. Philadelphia has been termed the “Private City” in reference to a tradition of domination by private business interests (Warner 1987). At the same time, Pennsylvania unions have been strong and politically organized in this industrial state. As in other states, union strength in education has recently been challenged by demands for vouchers and charter schools.

Whether agricultural, industrial, or mountainous, the regions of Pennsylvania are very distinct. These variances often produce political cleavages arguably contributing to the low level of state-level grassroots activity. In Philadelphia we found a high number of local advocacy groups, but we could not find evidence that these groups attempted to influence state policy. Not unlike New Jersey, Pennsylvania has a very localistic political culture. To illustrate this point, the state has the second highest number of local governmental units in the nation. One study characterizes Pennsylvania as having considerable power (Crotty 1993). There are regional loyalties to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Lancaster, and other areas and little common sympathy towards the rest of the state.

In the area of education politics, we found that the cities did not cooperate with each other. Community activists found it difficult to maintain coalitions across Philadelphia and statewide. Indeed, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh each go it alone. The state legislature was not highly regarded by citizens or lobbyists. This all netted low interest group activity in state education policy. Both unions and businesses reported avoiding state-level lobbying in order to focus on federal policy in Washington (Crotty 1993). Several interviewees from community groups expressed disgust with the slow pace of change in Harrisburg. Thus, while education politics could be said to benefit from the state’s senior progressives, localism and regionalism counterbalance those values.

### **Texas: Pro-Business Individualism**

Power in Texas is more dependent on the individual and his or her connections rather than on any organizational affiliation. In short, decisions are made behind closed doors. Texas is neither very participatory nor progressive and also has a localistic culture. In Texas, government is expected to abide by a policy of non-intervention, it is dominated by free market enthusiasm. In example, there is little regulation and no corporate income tax. Politics are dominated by an “Establishment” of business leaders who have influence over policymaking (Davidson 1990). These “Establishment” members are largely drawn from the oil, trucking, and electronics industries. In fact, many Texas politicians are themselves successful businessmen. This group of elites, however, is not closed in the usual southern way; outsiders and the newly wealthy can earn respect.

Many sources identify the overall political climate of Texas as conservative. This categorization is disputed vigorously by one observer. Historically most statewide elections in Texas were won by conservative Democrats and Republicans. Yet Chandler Davidson argues that Texas is no more conservative in political outlook than the rest of the country and that most elections are close (Davidson 1990). A liberal wing of the Democratic Party occasionally wins office as evidenced by the election of Governor Ann Richards. She was replaced, however, by then conservative governor, now president, George W. Bush. Also a factor is the religious right, clearly active in Texas politics. Many Texas millionaires such as H.L. Hunt have donated great sums of money to far right causes (Davidson 1990). One observation indicates that Texas “seems to lean Republican in times of economic trouble and Democratic in prosperity” (Barone and Ujifusa 1994, 1204). San Antonio, Austin, and the border areas are Democratic strongholds, the rural areas are culturally conservative and now vote Republican, and Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth are closely contested but also often go Republican. Clearly, the size and diversity of Texas is reflected in its political culture.

Widespread participation in politics is not the norm in Texas. In fact, voter turnout rates are very low compared to the national figures, and Texas often ranks at the bottom of the list of state turnout for presidential elections (Day and Gaither 2000). Off-year elections and local

rates have even more dismal rates of voter participation. One explanation for low voter turnout in Texas is the lack of organized groups that link people to politics and encourage participation.

As explained in a subsequent chapter of this study, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) is the only education advocacy group with any sizable influence in Texas. Labor unions are few and weak, and political parties are often “labels under which contesting politicians construct personal organizations rather than grassroots structures that maintain lasting contact with voters” (Champagne and Collis 1984, 141). In fact, in education, there are four weak unions all competing for membership dividing the power of teachers as a whole. Moreover, the establishment-led, personal politics of Texas political culture is evident in education policy research. As one interviewee said, “There is no monolith. No grand controlling force. It is the strength of individuals. Education is a complicated arena, so you have people who develop expertise. There’s a top echelon that has assumed responsibility. Informally and formally. ...It’s the same group of people making all the decisions” (Interview 1997). Another remarked, “It is characteristic of Texas politics that there is no open conflict” (Interview 1997 ).

When compared to other states Texas again appears at the bottom of the list for quantity of social services delivered. Historically, the state is low in per-pupil educational expenditures and has among the smallest welfare payments despite a high rate of poverty. Furthermore, Texas has been listed as having the highest percentage of people without health insurance (Barone and Ujifusa 1994).

The Texas picture is not totally one-sided, however, and there have been signs of possible changes to come. Progressive politicians such as Ralph W. Yarborough, Barbara Jordan, and Jim Hightower have won office and national recognition. This illustrates that progressivism is, at a minimum, part of the political debate in Texas. Industrialization, urbanization, and increasing numbers of racial minorities who are (slightly) better organized politically are all having an impact. Texas has also become much more urban and much more suburban with a total of twenty-five metropolitan areas defined by the U.S. Census. Notably, Latino and African American voters, often the most impoverished, have grown in number and can sway elections.

School finance reform in Texas provides an example of the influence of business on policy and the general anti-tax, anti-government bias. The most recent legislation that could have impacted educational equity was the governor’s Property Tax Cut Act of 1997. It likely would have changed the way education funding was raised, perhaps making it more equitable.

As the act might have led to an increased sales tax, businesses bitterly opposed it. The plan also failed to win the support of the Christian right wing of the Republican party due to suspicions that it would centralize taxation and give more power to the Texas Education Association (Beinart 1998). In the end, only a very minor reform was passed. Lawmakers instead voted to increase the state mandated residential property tax exemption, effectively cutting property taxes slightly. So, when tax reform was proposed in the name of education, it instead resulted in a tax cut and less money for schools.

As explained above, some literature on Texas state political culture portrays Texan politicians as moderate in ideology, but the Christian right is a new and important influence that has disrupted this moderate tendency. The groups active in this state include: the Christian Coalition, the Eagle Forum, Citizens for Excellence in Education, and Women for America. The Eagle Forum, an organization whose motto is “Progress through the preservation of traditional values,” frequently testifies before the State Board of Education. Austin, Houston, and San Antonio all have strong chapters of the Christian Coalition. In the suburbs one sees more activity from the Excellence in Education group. These organizations control the State Board of Education and many local school boards. The main educational issues of the religious right in Texas, and throughout the country, are curriculum reform and local control (Interview 1996). In Texas, the religious right is also very much against the school-to-work initiative that is seen as an effort by big business and the federal government to become too involved in local concerns.

The institutional structure of education in Texas also reflects the state’s political culture. The central state government of Texas is big and in some ways dominates the local governments; this is true in the realm of education. Education was substantially decentralized in 1995, but the state board of education still has a great deal of power. The cities do not have leaders to articulate their interests. Mayors and city councils have no formal control over education and rarely take a public stance on an education issue. Most advocacy groups do not work on the behalf of urban areas because the poor and minority populations are spread across a region, not concentrated in cities. In sum, according to one observer, “There’s not a lot of organized constituency to impact at city and state level” (Interview 1997).

## **Conclusion: Political Culture in Education Politics**

Certainly, demographics, suburbanization, and other national trends have led to shifts in the education regimes and agendas in most of the states in this study. In each of the states, race underlies the conflicts between suburban and city politics, the influence of which cannot be underestimated. This underlying factor notwithstanding, each state also has unique education politics, participants, and policy outcomes. The differences are due, in part, to state political cultures in the realm of education. Our research found traditionally progressive states have experimented more boldly with charter schools or finance reform. Similarly, states with a populist tradition have greater participation in education politics. Meanwhile, localistic states wrestle with issues of standards and governance. In each of the states, race underlies the issue of suburban vs. city politics, and that cannot be underestimated in influencing much of what matters in setting the education agenda.

## EDUCATION FINANCE REFORM IN NINE STATES

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Throughout America's history, we have struggled to achieve equity and excellence in education. Should schools have the same financial resources and educational outputs regardless of the wealth of the community? Or is this a utopian dream, and instead, should some schools provide an exceptional education for some students? Unequal state aid to schools remains the most fundamental equity issue in this country. Huge gaps between urban and suburban spending still exist in some of the biggest states, and the segregation resulting from suburbanization permits these discrepancies to exist with a minimum of public protest. Wealthy districts are simply not committed to redistributive taxation to help the cities while anti-city biases of state legislatures, who respond to their major supporters in suburban districts, result in underfunded city schools.

The fact that educational equity is clearly needed to maintain a vital democratic society seems to have been forgotten in many states. *Education Week* ranked all the states according to their distribution of resources and found most were highly inequitable (1999).

**Table Two. Education Week's State by State Evaluation of Financial Equity**

	1997	1998	1999
CA	D	?	C
GA	B	C	B-
IL	C-	D	D
MD	A-	C	C+
MI	B	D+*	C
MN	B-	C+	C
NJ	D+	?	C
PA	C+	C-	C-
TX	D	C	C

The D+ for equity reflects the last year of data under a now-defunct school finance system. New information was not yet available.

During the course of our study, we observed two methods of dealing with school finance equity: one was through state supreme court challenges of the system of financing schools and the other was through political initiatives by the governors in the states. As reflected in their stakeholders and intended outcomes, these two means of reforming school finances are very different. Usually, the legal charge for reform was led by city or rural advocates and school districts while the legislative method was often championed by Republican governors who sought to improve finances in rural and poor suburbs.

### **Legal Challenges**

Since 1971, beginning with a California court case, financial inequities in education have been challenged in state courts. This differential between rich and poor districts has been the basis for court cases in nearly half the states in the last decade. Notably, many state constitutions contain provisions requiring all children be provided with an equal and adequate education. State constitutions typically mandate education be provided in a “free”, “uniform”, “efficient”, “thorough”, “ample” or “basic” way (Augenblick 1998). Although most cases brought in the 1970s sought to address only financial inequality under states’ equal protection clauses, more recent cases have used these same constitutional requirements to challenge other inequities such as equipment, and teaching, as a part of the adequacy concept. The adequacy arguments also allow reformers to include governance and restructuring as areas for court review and possible reform. Pursuing litigation as a means to reform may prove advantageous in forcing a recalcitrant legislature to action and in providing an impetus for necessary tax increases or reformulations. However, if the court disregards political realities, legislative action and implementation is likely not to occur (Gittell 1998).

In four of the nine states we researched, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Minnesota, city activists and poor school districts challenged the system of funding schools in the courts during the course of the study. Plaintiffs from under-funded school districts in rural and urban areas brought their cases before the state supreme courts and claimed that the lack of financial equity in their states was a violation of the state constitution. In Pennsylvania, three cases on the behalf of the city of Philadelphia and one case brought by the rural schools were considered during the course of this study. As of January 1999, Philadelphia and the rural areas were all appealing unfavorable decisions that occurred in 1998. As previously noted, the New

Jersey the courts have been involved in financial equity since 1970. At the conclusion of our research in January of 1998 there were two school finance cases before the New Jersey state supreme court - one on behalf of city schools and the other on behalf of rural school districts. In Minnesota, there were two financial equity court cases - one on behalf of Minneapolis and the other on behalf of St. Paul. In Maryland, Baltimore filed a case against the state in 1995, but the case was dropped as a result of a compromise agreement worked out between the state and the city.

# New Jersey in Depth

## A Brief Summary of New Jersey Finance Reform

The *Robinson v. Cahill* suit of 1970 set the tone for the state's school financing debate for the subsequent twenty-seven years. The case presented the argument that funding schools through property taxes discriminates against property-poor city districts, and the resulting fiscal disparities create achievement gaps between city and suburban public school students. In 1973 the state supreme court agreed with this reasoning, but the legislature resisted the order to change school funding formulas. In 1976 the court closed public schools for a few days to force the legislature to pass an income tax to pay for the school funding plan. Since then, city districts have gone to the state supreme court three more times seeking additional spending, and the court has ruled in their favor each time finding the existing funding system to be unconstitutional. In response, the state has injected millions of dollars into city school districts; in recent years they spent about ninety percent as much as the wealthy districts. The fourth supreme court decision of May 1997 mandated that the twenty-eight special needs districts must receive state funds to allow them to raise per-pupil spending to match that of the richest districts--\$8,200 (Lindsay 1997). New Jersey spends about one-third of its budget on education.

## The Education Law Center (ELC)

The Education Law Center (ELC) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1973 and is the only non profit law firm in New Jersey specializing in education law. Through their Education and Reform Accountability Project, the ELC has promoted state accountability toward city public schools. Their landmark litigation of *Abbott v. Burke* established a national precedent for education reform and fiscal equity. The ELC asserted that New Jersey failed to remedy the disparities between wealthy and poor school districts. Assistant Director Steve Bloc held that "the goal of this right-wing state government, as outlined under the Whitman plan, is to totally undermine and devastate what remains of public education in order to make way for exclusionary private schools, using vouchers as advanced charter school legislation...such privatization would provide an immense number of money opportunities to those who could afford to play a role in the construction, administration, and oversight of the private schools" (Interview 1996). The ELC faulted the media for treating the governor with kid gloves. According to Bloc, a Star Ledger reporter made the off-the-record comment to him that the paper presents Whitman in a more positive light than is necessary (Interview 1996). The ELC has a working relationship with several other community and advocacy organizations including the Garden State Coalition, the Peoples' Organization For Progress, the Urban Parents Educational Institute, and the Parent Educational Network. The ELC's twenty-eight year court battle ended May 21, 1998 with the court's unanimous decision to endorse the Whitman administration's plan to improve city schools without court specified spending (Preston 1998). At the same time the court affirmed earlier rulings that "ordered the state to assure that the 28 urban districts involved in the court case spend as much per pupil as the state's highest-spending suburbs" (Hendrie 1998, n.p.).

# New Jersey in Depth

## New Jersey Finance Reform - A Legislative Time Line

**February 1981** - The Education Law Center, a public interest law firm, filed *Abbott v. Burke* in the New Jersey Superior Court on behalf of twenty children in Camden, East Orange, Irvington and Jersey City. They contended that the school finance system widened the gap between poor city and wealthy suburban school districts in violation of the thorough and efficient standard established under *Robinson v. Cahill* in 1975

**August 1988** - The court ruled that Chapter 212, the Public School Education Act, failed to meet the “thorough and efficient” requirement of the New Jersey State Constitution because educational opportunity was determined by socioeconomic status and geographic location. In February of 1989, Education Commissioner Saul Cooperman rejected the findings of the decision and filed an appeal.

**June 1990** - The New Jersey Supreme Court again declared, in *Abbott v. Burke*, that the fifteen year old funding plan was unconstitutional. The court ordered the state to bring school spending in the twenty-eight neediest districts up to the level of its wealthiest suburbs. The *Abbott* decision stated that poor, disadvantaged students must be given an equal educational opportunity. As a result, in September 1990, the Department of Education approved a corrective action plan for the public schools. The *Abbott* ruling opened the door for Governor Florio’s Quality Education Act (QEA).

**December 1992** - State senate leader Donald DeFrancesco and assembly speaker Garabed Haytain, after a successful Republican assault on Florio’s QEA, dubbed “The Robin Hood Plan,” compelled Governor Florio to reach a compromise on education. The compromise plan, the Public School Reform Act of 1992, raised the spending cap in wealthier districts and again allowed for unequal funding levels.

**July 1994** - The court found the plan unconstitutional because it failed to comply with the state’s plan to obey the court’s 1990 ruling and ordered the spending gap between rich and poor districts closed by 1997. In response, the Department of Education approved spending guidelines suggested by Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz in September 1994 to insure that the twenty-eight most impoverished districts would obtain a greater share of state aid. The guidelines also provided for the monitoring of academic and administrative expenditures and served as a blueprint for the receipt of state funds. They included smaller class sizes, updated curriculums, and new teaching technologies.

**October 1994** - The first detailed analysis of New Jersey’s fiscal reform plan, implemented in 1990, found the gap in per-pupil spending decreased and the quality of education in wealthy districts was not undermined. The new funding, however, was inadequate to overcome disadvantages in poor districts. In fact, the researchers found that the current trend in school reform would create greater imbalances in funding. The share of state aid to the thirty poorest districts increased only four percent, from thirty seven percent to forty-one percent, during the first two years of the program. Also, over one-third of the new aid -- \$193 million--was used for special education for at-risk children rather than for the general use as mandated by the court in its earlier decision (Firestone 1997).

# New Jersey in Depth

## New Jersey Finance Reform - A Legislative Time Line

**Late 1996** - The Whitman school finance plan was passed by the legislature and the Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing went into effect. It linked budget appropriations to a set of core curriculum standards for all public schools in the state. It increased total state education spending by \$285 million, the largest spending increase without an accompanying tax increase in the state's history. Under this plan, 381 districts received more state aid, 68 remained at the same level, and 78 received less. This funding proposal, along with the regulations proposed by the governor in February of 1997, extended the powers of the state commissioner and county superintendents to unprecedented levels. A district may spend more than the governor's cap allows as long as district voters approve. The plan also lowered the caps for all districts further impairing city districts and forcing them to do more with less. This was, of course, despite the state supreme court's ruling in *Abbott v. Burke* that they lacked sufficient funding at the outset. City districts with inadequate tax bases were unlikely to be able to make use of the option to spend above the cap.

**January 1997** - The Education Law Center (ELC) asked the court to order the closing of a \$250 million gap in educational spending by June 30. The ELC maintained the state was constitutionally responsible for providing districts with the funding necessary to meet specific standards in core subjects. The plan made "no pretense of bridging the gap between the poor systems and the state's wealthiest suburbs as the (supreme court) ruling directed" (Hendrie 1997b). David Sciarra, director of the Education Law Center, said the Whitman administration "thumbed their nose at the court" with their finance plan (Hendrie 1997b).

**May 1997** - The state supreme court ruled that Governor Whitman's school finance plan was unconstitutional. By linking standards and spending, the court found it ignored the state supreme court's order to establish fiscal parity between city and suburban districts. Without such parity, the court determined, the state was not fulfilling its obligation to provide a "thorough and efficient" education for all public school children as required by the state constitution. This was the fourth time since 1975 the court found that the state failed to provide enough money to the twenty-eight poorest school districts and their 285,000 students. The opinion remarked: "The state has had seven years to comply with a remedy intended to address, albeit partially, a profound deprivation that has continued for at least 25 years" (Hendrie 1997a). The current funding law, according to Justice Handler, "would force poor students to do more with less" (Hendrie 1997a). The court ordered the state to ensure the twenty-eight poorest districts (Special Needs Districts) met, at a minimum, the average per pupil expenditure (\$8,431) of the 120 richest districts. This decision required the state to increase its education budget, then at \$5 billion, by an additional \$250 million (Lindsay 1997).

**December 1997** - Seventeen school districts, mostly rural, filed suit against Governor Whitman charging the school financing plan didn't give them enough money to provide the "thorough and efficient education" mandated by the state's constitution. The districts said that since their towns were poor, they could not raise enough local property taxes to pay the costs of the new academic standards as imposed. Data showed test scores and graduation rates in the seventeen rural districts were only slightly higher than those in the twenty-eight city special needs districts (Goodnough 1997b). School officials protested the New Jersey State Supreme Court's May 1997 order to send an additional \$248 million to the twenty-eight special needs districts. The non-urban schools maintained that they too needed extra money and were unable to make up for cuts in state education dollars to districts that had resulted from Whitman's thirty percent state income tax cut. The state, however, held that its share of school spending increased since Whitman took office (Goodnough 1997a).

## Participants in Legal Cases

Certain individuals and groups were active participants in financial equity challenges in the nine states. City and rural advocacy groups as well as local school districts often brought these cases to court. Unions were not consistently involved in this policy area; they sometimes opposed redistribution of state aid to cities and instead preferred new funding. They less often supported the suits. The defendants ranged from the legislatures to the governors to the states' departments of education, the latter of which often saw a dramatic increase in their role subsequent to a court verdict. The high spending districts and tax payer organizations placed political pressure on the legislature and the governor to protect the existing system while the business community was usually neutral on this issue.

City advocacy groups were very involved in the legal cases involving financial equity. They often were the legal representatives of the plaintiffs in these cases. These groups included the NAACP in Minneapolis and the Education Law Center in Philadelphia and Newark. The Education Law Center (ELC) in Newark has been especially vigilant in forcing the state of New Jersey to consider equity. The ELC continually pressured the Whitman administration to adhere to the aforementioned court decision.

While city advocacy groups have been successful in the legal arena, they have been less active in building strong political coalitions and broad public support for implementation of

financial equity. In some cases, they organized small, local coalitions. For example, a coalition of about forty organizations in Philadelphia called "Close the Gap" sought to increase public awareness and educate the legislature. However, for the most part, these advocacy groups only had enough resources to work within

### **Pennsylvania Court System**

There was a general concern about how the Pennsylvania legislature would respond to a court decision in favor of increased equity. Many interviewees spoke of the legislature's tradition of disregarding court orders. Many believed that the legislature would even ignore the decision and carry on as before. One person suggested that this is a result of Pennsylvania's populist culture. According to one interviewee, "the court in Pennsylvania is far less activist than other states. There's a good chance that this case will get thrown out. That would let the legislature not do anything. The legislature might also ignore the court order. Seven years ago, the court ordered the legislature to change how the counties funded the local court system. It was never changed" (Interview 1996). Another interviewee said, "The legislature's attitude is wait and see, and it will decide later whether or not to listen to the courts. But there is no money. They haven't listened to the courts in the past. The courts have no mechanism to force the legislature to comply. We believe in our elected officials here. There is no recall, referendum or term limits" (Interview 1996).

the legal arena and within a local area. Coalition formation between major cities around the issue of fiscal equity was rarely achieved. In Minnesota, St. Paul and Minneapolis had two separate court cases while in Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh was not a part of three cases that involved Philadelphia.

Urban school districts, including those in St. Paul and Philadelphia, were often the defendants in the court cases. In Philadelphia, the district's high profile superintendent, David Hornbeck, was actively involved with the city's quest for additional school funding. He brought a case against the state in 1997 and engaged politically at the state level to secure additional funds for the city. He also repeatedly appealed to the governor to provide more money for Philadelphia schools. Superintendent Hornbeck's high level of involvement in state politics regarding the issue of fiscal equity was not matched by any of the other city school administrators in our study. In early 1998, notwithstanding his efforts and despite the threat of bankruptcy, the state continued to refuse to help the school system.

Court cases have been used by under-represented groups to force state leaders to address their needs. The cases themselves often narrow the parameters for solutions. In our study we found both rural and urban areas represented in law cases. Notably, rural areas often have many of the same funding needs as cities. Rural school districts filed cases with supreme courts in two of the study states, New Jersey and Minnesota. We did not witness any serious cooperation between rural and urban plaintiffs. In Pennsylvania there were four major court cases, one representing rural areas and three on behalf of students in Philadelphia, yet there was little more than a letter of support from the Philadelphia superintendent to representatives from the rural case. Philadelphia advocacy groups informed us that they had not supported the rural case because they felt rural schools benefited at the expense of Philadelphia schools in previous finance formula revisions.

The state supreme courts are important actors in legal challenges to the educational system. The level of judicial activism and the respect a court commands can make a difference in the outcome of the case. For example, in Minnesota where the court is conservative, plaintiffs who sought financial equity lost their case in 1993. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court also has a reputation for conservatism while in New Jersey and Texas the courts were far more activist. In Pennsylvania, many interviewees spoke about how little respect court decisions enjoyed in their

state. Many felt that even if the court had found in favor of the plaintiffs the legislature might have completely ignored their decision.

During the court cases, governors and legislatures appeared to sit back and wait for the court's verdict. For example, Governor Ridge of Pennsylvania issued a report which stated that greater fiscal resources for Philadelphia would not improve education, but he did not directly cite the case in public addresses. The role of governors and legislators is not insignificant in fiscal equity policy. More recently, governors and legislators have noted the futility of funding failing urban school systems. When the court rules that the state has to decrease fiscal inequities, the governor and the legislature are then responsible for putting together a reform policy. New Jersey was the only state where the court made such a verdict during the course of our study. Reformers interested in fiscal equity therefore can not only focus on the courts.

Influencing other state politicians is equally if not more important because the state's response to the court can vary greatly. They can put forward a progressive, ambitious reform as they did in Kentucky, they can put together a substitute reform that is again challenged by the courts as was done in New Jersey, or they can entirely disregard the court order as appears possible in Pennsylvania. Because the legislature and the governor are so important in fiscal equity policy, creating the political atmosphere for reform is just as important as putting together a successful legal case. (See our "New Jersey in Depth" section for further details about the role of the governor and the legislature in fiscal equity.)

Taxpayer organizations and representatives from wealthier districts are very influential in pressuring state politicians to preserve the status quo. Governor Florio's defeat in the 1993 election was partially due to efforts by groups who disliked his proposals for tax increases and redistribution of state aid. Meanwhile, Governor Whitman's successful 1997 reelection bid was strongly supported by wealthy districts. All the governors in the study faced resistance to any tax increase or restructuring proposals, and most campaigned vigorously on the issue of reducing taxes.

Teachers and professionals were supportive of reforms that proposed to infuse more money into the system, but these professionals also strongly believed spending caps should not be placed on wealthier school districts and that teachers' salaries should not be affected by reforms. Since eighty percent of school costs are for personnel, a shift in funds is likely to affect salaries, making many school professionals wary of equity reforms. Teachers' unions are not

united on these issues; on occasion, the NEA and AFT have chosen to support different types of equity cases. This was the case in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), an affiliate of the NEA, was supportive of the rural court case while the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), Philadelphia's branch of the AFT, supported Philadelphia's cases.

### **Gubernatorial Initiative**

In three states, Illinois, Texas, and Michigan, governors proposed restructuring the system of financing schools. Notably, these reforms came without the pressure of a court decision. Michigan's 1994 finance reform plan, enacted just before the beginning of our study, ended school funding's reliance on property taxes. The state instead pays for about eighty percent of K-12 education in each district. Most reports suggest that school finances are more equitably distributed in the state as a result.

In 1996, Governor Edgar of Illinois similarly proposed a more equitable distribution of school fiscal support. The plan held all districts harmless and combined an increase in the state income tax with property tax relief as well as modest increases in spending on education through an increase in the foundation formula, replacing the local property tax with a state tax. This original plan was not successful due to concerns that it would raise taxes. A more modest law was passed in late 1997. (For more information see the case study of Illinois below.)

In Texas, the Property Tax Cut Act of 1997 (put forth by former Governor George W. Bush) was designed to restructure the state's taxation system and would have affected the system of educational finance. The governor's proposal would have lowered property taxes by \$2.8 billion a year and paid for the cut with a half-cent increase in the state sales and motor vehicle taxes and with a business activity tax. It would have abolished the corporate franchise tax as well as the school property tax on business investment and replaced them with a 1¼ percent levy on all forms of business that bring in more than \$500,000 after deductions for certain expenses and capital investment. This proposal, like Governor Edgar's, failed because nobody could agree on what taxes should be raised. Businesses bitterly opposed any plan that would have increased taxation. The plan did not garner the support of the state GOP's Christian right wing which feared the reform would centralize taxation and give more power to the Texas Education Association (Beinart 1998).

## **Finance Reform in Illinois**

Despite a series of failed lawsuits, Illinois' very low national ranking in terms of equity, and a history of inaction, the spring 1997 legislative session held promise for the first major refinancing of the state education finance system in twenty-five years. Governor Edgar clearly led on the issue and forced the legislature to take up the question. In the fall of 1996, an Edgar appointed commission drew up a plan which the governor then supported. The plan held all districts harmless and combined an increase in the state income tax, property tax relief, and modest increases in overall spending on education through an increase in the foundation formula.

It was not entirely clear how well city schools would fare in the long term under the governor's plan, though they would receive increased funding in the short term. The highly-taxed, high-spending districts in Chicago's southern suburbs -- key constituents to Edgar's political coalition -- would have likely benefited the most as they would have received substantial property tax relief even while their high-spending schools would be held harmless. Chicago organizations did not push hard on this issue and turned out the lowest number of participants in any of the regional hearings held by the governor's finance panel. One interviewee said, "when the governor's commission held their hearings in Chicago, they had the smallest turnout of anywhere in the state. The reform groups just didn't turn anybody out for it. The real pressure is coming from the southern suburbs and rural downstate districts. Twenty people showed up in Chicago. In the southern suburbs, they filled an entire auditorium to overflowing" (Interview 1997).

While that bill passed in the state house, it failed to win Republican state senatorial support. Regional political tensions and Republican anti-tax sentiments were cited as problems to be overcome (Chicago Daily Herald 1998, 15). A key piece of the governor's proposal was a constitutional amendment which would have forced the legislature to deal with the equity question, and this was defeated in the fall of 1997 amid great confusion. Many legislators thought they were voting on the actual funding plan, when in fact they were voting on an amendment which would have clearly made drafting such a plan their prerogative. The governor's commission report was leaked prior to its scheduled press conference, and the morning of the press conference the Chicago Tribune ran a front page article with the headline, "Edgar prepares tax bombshell" thereby sealing its fate. The legislature did put \$290 million into the existing formula, but reworking the system was shelved.

## Finance Reform in Illinois

Governor Edgar went back out on the stump with the plan, dealt with it in his State of the State address, and hired the former Secretary of the Department of Insurance, a trusted aid and respected lobbyist, to shepherd his finance bill through the legislature. Edgar's subsequent, scaled-back proposal was also voted down by Democrats in the assembly in November of 1997.

The Illinois House of Representatives held a one-day special session on December 3, 1997 and passed a broad school reform bill that raises spending on poor students and amends teacher-licensing rules. For the first time in Illinois history there was a minimum per-pupil spending law and the state spending level on education was increased. The House Democrats (seventeen Democrats switched their votes) finally passed this legislation due to pressure from the governor and public weariness over the state's prolonged school funding debate. Teacher and professional groups expressed worry that the funding base, taxes on cigarettes, river boat gambling, and telephone services, was too unstable. This law also made it easier for schools to contract out for services, increased the number of years before teachers were awarded with tenure, and made it easier for non-certified teachers to teach (Johnston 1997).

In Governor Edgar's 1998 State of the State speech, he again vowed to change the Illinois's school finance system by replacing the property tax with a state sales tax. He announced that he would appoint a blue-ribbon panel to study this issue and to arrive at conclusions by December 31, just before he left office (Parsons 1998). In February, the *Chicago Tribune* reported, Edgar appointed members to the panel. Tim Bramlet, the president of the Taxpayers Federation of Illinois, was to serve as chair. Other members included: Paul Vallas, CEO of Chicago Schools; Greg Baise, president of the Illinois Manufacturer's Association; Michael E. Murphy, retired vice-chairman of the Sara Lee Corp.; and several state lawmakers (1998).



In Illinois, Michigan, and Texas, governors were instrumental in proposing finance reform. In Michigan and Illinois, the governors' plans seemed to respond to state inequities, however they did not respond to demands from city constituencies. Our interviewees argued that these types of finance reform were not aimed at improving equity on the behalf of city students. Instead, the governors responded to property-poor suburbs or rural areas. In Michigan's tax reform, the suburbs lost some funding, the rural areas gained the most, and the city saw a limited increase in funding. Many interviewees noted that the Republican legislators who supported Engler's plan were from rural districts, and they were the big winners in the finance reform. In Illinois, the governor was responding to the working class suburbs from the southern suburbs and rural areas (Interview 1997). The Illinois governor, who did not run for reelection in November 1998, continued to work towards replacing the property tax with a state sales tax to support education.

Texas' reform, while it would have interfered with the financing of education, was not a plan to achieve further equity. In fact, many interviewees believed it would worsen the situation. They also said Texas Governor George W. Bush believed this reform was a means for him to gain national recognition in order to be considered for the U.S. presidency. Interviewees further noted that the plan became a major talking point in his national campaign.

Anti-tax sentiment in Illinois and Texas contributed to watering down the finance reform plans. In some states, taxpayer organizations were well organized and influential. In other states, opposition to changing the system of taxation came from the business community. For example, in Texas the business community was very opposed to Bush's tax reform, though in other states the business community has supported change in the property tax because rising school costs increase their tax burden as property owners. Since the 1980s, opposition to raising or restructuring taxes has become a defining issue in state politics and affects all policies.

### **Hybrid Case - Maryland**

In Maryland, finance reform was not only a court issue but was addressed in a meaningful way by the governor in response to the lawsuits. In a unique arrangement, the city of Baltimore, in exchange for a state takeover of the schools, received additional funding despite suburban complaints. In December of 1994, the Baltimore American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) chapter filed a lawsuit seeking more education dollars for the city district. The suit

focused on the high cost of educating at-risk students and claimed a denial of the right to an adequate education guaranteed by the state constitution. The ACLU also argued that Baltimore, due to a lack of funds, was impeded from adhering to the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP) (Bowler 1994). The city faced sanctions from the state for not meeting the program's performance requirements as reflected in standardized tests. In February 1995 the state school board ordered Baltimore to reform three more schools that did not meet MSPP requirements, and they offered \$1.5 million in assistance (Thompson 1995).

Governor Glendening took office in January 1995 with an electoral support base that included Baltimore City, Prince George's County, and the Maryland State Teachers Association. After being in office for a while and studying school reform, he took public positions favoring the state takeover efforts and re-appointed former governor Schaefer's superintendent (Bowler 1995). Nancy Grasmick, Glendening's first superintendent, had feuded with the unions and Baltimore over school reform. Glendening attempted to find middle ground between the legislature, the bureaucracy, and the interests of Baltimore. In September 1995, Baltimore filed a lawsuit against the state demanding more school funding. This case also focused on adequacy and would later join the ACLU case. Parties representing Baltimore included the mayor, the city council, and the city school board. The state filed a countersuit that claimed any problems were the result of local mismanagement (Portner 1996).

In 1992 Baltimore put some of its schools in the hands of a private, for-profit manager, Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI). Mayor Schموke ordered an independent evaluation of this program in July 1995. This evaluation showed that the privately managed schools failed to show any sign of improvement. Then, in December 1995 when EAI demanded more money, Mayor Schموke canceled the contract. At that time, thirty-five out of thirty-seven schools in Baltimore were identified as needing "reconstitution" because they fell below performance standards. Under the MSPP reconstituted schools could be taken over by the state for other managing arrangements.

The Maryland legislature created a Baltimore School Funding Bill in May of 1996. Because the bill did not call for adequate funding and provided for state takeovers with no local control, Mayor Schموke, who endorsed Glendening in the 1994 election, convinced the governor to veto the legislation (Zorzi Jr. 1996). Finally, the state and city worked out a more generous deal for school finance and governance: First, Baltimore would receive \$254 million in

extra state aid over five years. Second, reconstituted schools would be managed under joint powers with Mayor Schmoke and Governor Glendening cooperating in the appointment of a new board of directors and a new chief operating officer. The latter must produce annual reports and may be fired if the schools do not perform. In exchange for these concessions the mayor agreed to end both lawsuits (Zorzi Jr. 1997). Almost all of Baltimore's schools are in the reconstitution plan and are governed by the new board. When new schools, based on declining standardized test scores, are identified for reconstitution they are given two years to improve. Nine schools in Prince George's County were identified for reconstitution if they did not improve (Brown 1998). There are also two rural schools on the list.

Maryland is unique among the states in our study because additional funding was eventually provided to Baltimore. Maryland policy distinctly links finance reform to governance reform. This state was the only one in our study that focused its education reform efforts on the city. This can be attributed to the mayor's importance in statewide politics and his hands-on role in shaping state education policy as well as to the activism of parent groups at the state level. Interviewees in Baltimore perceived this reform as a positive effort of the state government to respond to city school needs. Maryland's exceptionalism in this study is attributable to its political culture and party competition. It is one of the few states in our study to have a Democratic legislature and governor. The state contains many government employees and the African-American community is highly organized, contributing to its solid Democratic and pro-government culture (Orr 1999). The wealthier suburbs and some rural areas, which are Republican, are in the minority. Because of Democrat control, Baltimore is often important in statewide elections. Mayor Schaeffer went on and became governor, and the current mayor is prominent in state politics. In fact, he recently made national headlines by endorsing a Democratic challenger to Glendening's reelection. Thus, the strong Baltimore mayor, a robust statewide government, and a Democratic tradition all contribute to this state's approach to finance reform.

### **Achieving Excellence with Equality**

During the course of our study we found that enthusiasm for educational equity as a legislative policy item had waned. This was clearly evinced by the little or non-existent support at state capitals for finance reform. Between 1995 and 1997, in many states including California

and Georgia, finance reform was not an issue in the courts or the legislature. Even when forced by the courts to address education inequities officials in the states often dodged the issue. In at least two states, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, improved standards (read excellence) were proposed by the governor as a substitute for equity (Gittell and McKenna 2000).

This inattention to fiscal equity has many explanations. Most significant is the shift in control of state legislatures and governors' offices to suburban voters. City interests are less important as are equity issues. The current state regimes in education have little interest in improving educational funding for cities; they lack interest in city schools. Although some governors have shown some interest in providing more money to their constituencies in rural and working-class suburbs, raising or restructuring taxes has also become politically unpopular.

The prime challengers to the education regime, fiscal equity advocates, are war weary. After years of politically and legally organizing, they have chosen to focus on other policy issues. Many states in our study, including California, Illinois, and Texas, spent years debating educational equity and have since moved on to other issues. Our interviewees confirmed that the state officials grew too conservative to adequately respond to educational inequities and city needs. Those advocacy groups still working towards equity have only been able to focus on the courts, not in forming coalitions to build broad political support behind the ruling. This is partially attributable to the fact that litigation is expensive, time consuming, and resource-depleting (Interview 1999).

The federal emphasis must be on equality. Our strong tradition of federalism and local community based education should be the source of bottom up definitions of standards. Public discourse in communities gives vitality to education goals, not assessment tests and directives from Washington. The federal government's role should be to provide leadership by requiring that plans for correcting school finance inequities be an essential part of federal policy.

Improved governance, broader participation, higher standards, more equitable funding, and encouragement of public debate should be in federal legislation which must be straight forward about its priorities. An essential part of the federal role is its assertion of national leadership in confirming social values and priorities. Evidence of the importance of combining these essential elements in any federal policy is the experience in states where the courts have made strong decisions regarding the legal requirements for equitable funding. In Texas the action of the court has been negated by the unwillingness of the legislature to act. State

legislators often have little incentive to redress the inequities suffered by powerless constituencies. The lack of a more inclusive political coalition supporting the re-design of the school aid legislation has been particularly costly. Successful court actions in Alabama and Connecticut, ruling in favor of finance reform, on the other hand, have been backed up by organized political groups representing a cross section of public interests. Their goals are publicized and clear: they include equity and high standards to be achieved through new and more inclusive governance practices. Such coalitions, however, are few and far between.

All tolled, at least twenty states have court cases pending challenging school financing equity.<sup>2</sup> Working to ensure that challenges to equity are equated with challenges to inadequacy is the mission that confronts the school reform movements today. Only when broad coalitions come together to work on these issues at the state judicial level, in conjunction with efforts directed at local officials and legislators, will school finance reform become a holistic endeavor with complementary solutions at all levels of government within our federal system. In sum, equitable funding of schools and school districts is fundamental to our commitment to equality.

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<sup>2</sup>“School Finance.” *Education Week on the Web*. December 2000. 4 January 2001.  
<<http://www.edweek.com/context/topics/issuespage.cfm?id=22>>.

## CHARTER SCHOOL POLITICS IN NINE STATES

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Charter schools are privately established and administered institutions that receive public funding. Authorized by the state, they are largely independent of the local school district and school board. They are created and operated by a combination of parents, teachers, community members, or institutions of higher education. Charter schools are generally free from many state education regulations including the new state standards of accountability. In the 1990s, twenty-nine states and Washington, D.C. passed legislation that enabled the formation of charter schools. President Clinton called for the creation of 3,000 schools by the year 2000 and created a federal grant program to provide planning funds to charter operators. There is much variation among state laws regarding the autonomy of these schools and their independence from school boards, regulations, and teachers' unions. In the 2000 presidential campaign both candidates supported charter schools but did not advocate holding them to the standards and testing requirements of the system as a whole.

Charter school advocates maintain that the schools foster opportunities to develop alternative and innovative teaching techniques, stimulate existing public schools to improve due to competition, and provide new avenues for parental participation. Interestingly, conservatives, progressives, and moderates have all found reasons to embrace this school reform. Political conservatives "view them as a step toward a more radically de-monopolized system in which students would receive vouchers to attend public, private or parochial schools" (Cohen 1998). Progressive supporters, on the other hand, consider charter schools a unique opportunity to implement school reforms free from bureaucratic constraints and to increase the roles of parents, teachers, and the community. They also tend to favor charter schools for at-risk children in poorly performing school districts. Moderates may see charter schools as a means of improving schools without resorting to the more dramatic reforms envisioned by conservatives.

Opponents of charters view them as a threat to public education and the local democratic institutions they support. One scholar anticipates that charter schools will "erode the public forums in which decisions with societal consequences can be democratically resolved" (Henig 1998). Teachers' unions and school board associations are concerned that the use of uncertified teachers and administrators will lead to mismanagement of charter schools and a lack of job protection for charter employees. Exceptions to the union contract requirements threaten to

undermine collective bargaining agreements. Some public education advocates worry charter schools will hurt traditional public schools by diverting funds from them and by deflecting attention away from the need for other wider-scale education reform. Public education advocates maintain that many of the progressive models of education being used in charter schools, such as Success for All, are also being used by traditional public schools. Some suggest charter schools cannot be held accountable for results because there is a lack of consensus as to how to assess educational outcomes. In support of this view, it is noted that while charters have been revoked for fiscal mismanagement and for violation of church-state rules, none (as of 1998) were revoked for academic failure (Rothstein 1998). Perhaps the main objection to charter schools by reformers is the fear that they detract from system-wide reforms and equity concerns.

Charter legislation has clearly encouraged diverse approaches to schooling. There are Montessori charters, “back-to-basics” charters, on-line charters without formal classrooms, Christian charters, home-school charters, Afrocentric charters, civil rights charters sponsored by organizations like the National Council of La Raza, and charters that adopt a particular pedagogical approach such as E.D. Hirsch’s Core Knowledge or Mortimer Adler’s Paideia curricula (Rothstein 1998). Recent research tested some assumptions of charter school advocates and opponents. One study focused on the impact of charter schools upon the public school districts, specifically testing whether the charter schools caused changes in school districts or stimulated innovation. Among the many impacts documented by Rofes (1998) was that a significant number of public schools lost funding when charter schools opened in their district. It was also discovered in another study that only twenty-four percent of the school districts altered their programs in response to charter schools (Nathan 1996).

Joe Nathan claims that charter schools can have a positive impact on student achievement, attendance, and attitude and cites evidence that they encourage school districts to improve (Nathan 1997). He also maintains that the renewal of charter contracts in several states is testimony to their success (Nathan 1997). However, he acknowledges that the “movement is young” and cannot be fully evaluated until valid methods exist to test student achievement and assess charters’ impact on existing public schools (Nathan 1996).

An evaluation of the first year of New Jersey’s charter school program found that the schools were small (averaging 103 students), class size was small (ranging from eight to twenty students), and the school day and the academic year were longer than average. In addition, the

administrative and support staff was found to be minimal (Kane 1998). Well's (1998) study of California charter schools appears to refute many of the claims made by charter advocates. For example, she found charter schools were not more accountable than regular public schools. Additionally they neither influenced regular public schools to become more market-driven nor had they served as models of positive change and reform. This was due, in part, to a lack of mechanisms for charter schools and traditional public schools to learn from each other.

### **Strong vs. Weak Charter Laws**

Charter school legislation varies greatly from state to state. "Strong" charter laws exempt charter schools from state and local regulations giving them financial autonomy, fund them directly from the state, and allow charter schools to hire uncertified teachers. Some states even permit an unlimited number of charter schools to be created (Wells 1999; Mulholland 1995; Millot 1994; Premack 1996; Wood and Smith 1996). The literature defines strong laws as permissive laws. According to this definition, Michigan's law is one of the most permissive in the nation as "virtually any person or organization can open a charter school and enjoy wide latitude over staffing, curriculum, and spending, and the backing of the state lawmakers and regulators"(Cohen 1998). Most of Michigan's charter schools are sponsored by state universities, but the law also permits conversion schools (former private schools) to have charter status. For these schools, charter status is a way to increase their revenues. One critic accuses the charter law of "creating public subsidies for private schooling, and encouraging social balkanization" (Cohen 1998). Since Michigan hasn't had a testing mechanism to measure whether private or charter students learned more than regular public school students, it has been difficult for parents and children to make informed choices. Minnesota also has a strong charter law in which the state provides up to eighty percent of the charter school facility costs, doesn't place a cap on the number of schools, and permits colleges, universities, and non-profit organizations to operate charter schools.

"Weak" charter laws are more narrowly conceived. They only permit existing public schools to become charters and do not give them fiscal independence from local school boards. They force charters to request waivers from state rules and regulations, do not permit private schools to convert to charters, cap the number of schools permitted in the state, and do not allow charters to have admissions criteria (Wells 1996). New Jersey's law, for example, has an

element of “weakness” in its requirement that schools be funded through the local districts. Districts, however, have little incentive to support these schools since they have minimal control over them.

Six states in this study (California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Minnesota, and Texas) are considered to have a strong to medium-strong laws. Maryland doesn’t have a charter bill, and Georgia and Illinois have weak legislation (Center for Education Reform 1998; Rees and Youseff 1998 ).<sup>3</sup> Labeling laws strong or weak does have a limited utility. It may be useful to specify the strong and weak elements of a state law to help reveal strengths and weaknesses in the charter coalition or the opposition. For example, laws that permit the use of uncertified teachers are more likely to exist in states with weak unions while laws that permit an unlimited number of charter schools may occur in states with weak school boards or citizen initiative provisions.

In Georgia, teachers’ unions are considered weak because they do not have collective bargaining rights, yet they have had a strong legislative influence. Although the unions in Georgia are not structurally powerful, they have long-standing ties to the Democratic party which ensures their informal influence. Georgia’s charter law is considered the weakest of all the state laws. In Georgia, only existing public schools can become charter schools, and teachers must be certified and receive the same benefits as their traditional public school counterparts (Dickert 1995). To create a charter school, a majority of the faculty as well as the local and state boards must approve it, and there must be incentive funding for school planning. There are only twenty-eight charter schools in Georgia.

Some state laws do permit a high degree of autonomy; however, they may balance this strength by making it difficult to establish charter schools. California is one such state. Overall, its charter law is strong because schools are relatively autonomous and permitted to employ uncertified teachers. The charter approval process, however, is a “weak” element of the law as charters are granted through local school districts that are pressured by strong unions to reject such requests. Applications that are denied at the local level may go through a cumbersome appeals process that usually results in the forfeiture of fiscal autonomy.

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<sup>3</sup>The 1988 decentralization of the Chicago public schools authorized city wide school choice in 1991.

The California law was strengthened in May 1998 when the legislature passed a bill begun as a citizen initiative and supported by the Californians for Public School Excellence, a business-education coalition. This legislation raised the cap on the number of charter schools from 100 to 250 (in 1998-99), permitted the addition of 100 schools each year thereafter, and allowed nonprofit groups to run charter schools (Johnston 1998a). Some claimed the bill signaled a shift in the reform movement from a “tributary role to a mainstream movement in California education” (Engellenner 1998). The charter movement may also get a boost from bilingual education advocates because charters are exempt from Proposition 227 which requires public schools to replace bilingual education programs with English immersion (Helfand 1998). Weak elements of the California law do remain as funding and approval come from the district level (Mahtesian 1998).

While New Jersey’s charter law has been considered weak, it is nonetheless easier to create a school in New Jersey than in California. Charters may be established by teaching staff, parents, a combination of both, or by a private entity or higher educational institution in conjunction with parents or teachers. Laws in Michigan and Minnesota also facilitate school formation by having more than one chartering authority. New Jersey’s law is comparatively weak as only existing public schools can convert to charter status; private and parochial schools are ineligible. Only certified teachers may teach, and they are guaranteed the same salaries and benefits as traditional public school teachers. Charters are exempt from most public school regulations except those regarding health, safety, and civil rights.

### **Charter School Politics**

Statewide coalitions supporting charter schools are often composed of political adversaries with different goals. Our research found the bipartisan support for charter schools in many states masks different expectations from diverse groups. This supports the findings of Wells whose study concluded that

...the bipartisan agreement over charter schools is superficial at best and that beneath the surface, advocates of these new schools see them and their role in shaping the future of public education quite differently...in many states, charter schools embody less of a consensus of views...than a fragile bargain between

political adversaries who all seek to prove they favor educational reform, but for different reasons and toward different ends. (Wells 1999, 1)

There are both Republicans and Democrats who appreciate the potential of charter schools to improve public education. Republicans favor them because they fit into a conservative ideology that favors small government, deregulation, and market-based approaches to public service provision. Republicans maintain that by creating competition among schools and giving parents choice, public education will improve as schools vie to attract students.

While the New Jersey charter school law was proposed by Democratic Governor Florio, it became a Republican initiative under Governor Whitman. The bill passed with bipartisan support: the Democrats viewed it as a way to improve education for the poor and minorities in urban schools, and the Republicans perceived it as a way to improve schools by introducing competition into public education. Several mayors including Brett Schundler of Jersey City and urban legislators such as Joe Doria supported the bill. While the mayors of Hoboken and Trenton supported charter schools, they were concerned about their effect on the finances of existing local districts and public schools.

#### **Charter School Politics in New Jersey**

Trenton Superintendent of Schools, Paul Sequeira, preferred Governor Whitman work to improve all schools instead of focusing on charter schools. He did, however, acknowledge that public schools are limited in their ability to reform themselves: “We don’t lack for initiatives and ideas. But we are saddled with all these constraints that charter schools don’t have” (Goodnough 1998, B4). Governor Whitman denied any political agenda behind charter schools; “People in our regular public school system can look and see what’s happening in our charter schools . . . They are not designed to stop any other kind of education, but to make all education better” (Goodnough 1998, B4). Teaneck Superintendent Morris complained, however, that “Rather than helping public education, the governor is putting the knife through its heart” (Goodnough 1998, B4). If New Jersey’s funding system was changed, with funds coming from the state level and not local districts, many of these problems could be avoided. The Whitman administration, however, had not expressed any interest in changing the funding mechanism.

Democrats differ on charters from state to state. In California, for example, the charter school battle lines have been drawn between Republican legislators and the business community

on one side and the teachers' unions, the education bureaucracy, and Democratic legislators on the other. Former California Governor Pete Wilson annually tried without success to pass legislation lifting the cap on the number of schools. Wilson failed because California Democrats, closely allied with the teachers unions, were opposed to it. In contrast, charter schools in Minnesota enjoy solid bi-partisan support, and charter politics are "low-cost, informal and low-key" (Interview 1997).

### **Charter School Coalitions**

Charter school coalitions include corporations and corporate foundations, independent non-profit organizations, for-profit education companies, and advocacy groups. The power of unions and school boards has been limited by the charter movement which has grown with the expansion of the new more inclusive regimes.

In addition to members of the business community, charter school advocate coalitions include supporters from government, academia, and politics making for a broad and bipartisan base. All, however, are supported by business and all share a common function: to lobby for liberalized charter school laws, to facilitate networking among charter school actors, to serve as resource centers for charter school developers and operators, to advocate for more charter schools, and to publicize their successes. The ties to business, which fund and support them directly or through their foundations, enhance the political independence of these organizations and the power of the charter movement.

For example, the California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC), recently victorious in its campaign to expand the charter law, numbers among its supporters Apple Computers, RE/MAX, the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, various governmental organizations, and the California State University. The Charter School Resource Center of Texas is funded solely by foundations and corporations. The Center for School Change in Minnesota is funded by foundations, the University of Minnesota, the U.S. Department of Education, and corporations including Bradley and General Mills. The Charter School Resource Center in New Jersey is an independent, foundation-funded resource center designed to help charter school organizers with start-up.

## Charter School Coalitions in Minnesota

The Minnesota Charter School Coalition is an advocacy organization whose membership includes non-profits, businesses, charter schools, and individuals. The Children's Defense Fund and the Chamber of Commerce are also members. The coalition has an executive director, a paid lobbyist, and a legislative committee that tracks state policy and advocates for charter schools. The group brings students to testify to legislators about how charter schools have improved their lives and invites legislators to see the charter schools first hand. The group itself does not become involved with political campaigns, but the individual members are activists and will support the most pro-charter candidate who is also likely to be opposed by the unions. At the time of our research their action agenda was to promote the establishment of charter schools and provide technical assistance for which they receive state funds. In the future, the Minnesota Charter School Coalition hopes to secure more operating funds from the state and gain access to local referendum money.

Certain grassroots organizations are also important political players in the charter school movement. TEACH (Towards Education Accountability and Choice) Michigan has sought, through ballot initiative, to repeal the state's constitutional prohibition against full educational choice and to further liberalize the charter school legislation (Heritage Foundation 1998c).

For-profit education companies such as the Edison Project are also making inroads in the charter school movement. The Edison Project is a New York-based company that operates public schools for a profit; in the fall of 1998 it operated forty-eight schools in twenty-five cities, most in California (Sengputa 1998). Their schools are run according to a blueprint pursuant to which each participating family gets a Macintosh computer, the school day is extended by an hour, and the school year is extended by a month. The company is funded, in part, by a foundation established by the Fishers, owners of The Gap clothing chain.

While nonprofit charter school organizations are central to the movement, charter school coalitions include other important actors as well. In seven of the eight states in our study with charter laws, champions of charter school include the governor, legislative leaders, and businesses through the auspices of the nonprofit organizations or foundations they fund. Religious organizations have not been very active supporters of the charter school movement, although organizations of the religious right have established schools in California and Minnesota. Several African American church leaders who created their own schools support vouchers and charter schools. Reverend Flake in New York City is a leader among that group and an officer in the Edison Schools Corporation. Teachers' unions have managed to play an

important role in shaping the policies, making sure that collective bargaining gains are not violated by legislative provisions allowing greater flexibility in charter schools. The influence of these formal and informal stakeholders reveals the presence of the new education regime in many states.

### **Governors as Initiators**

Governors initiated charter school legislation in all of the nine states included in the study. To garner support, governors in Illinois, California, Michigan, and New Jersey reached out to minorities in urban areas, presenting charter schools as a way to improve ailing school systems. They gained support for their measures from key legislators, they formed special committees to create proposals, and while they actively denounced opponents, they brokered compromises when necessary. Charter schools were also mentioned in numerous state of the state addresses.

## **Governors' Support of Charter Schools**

The following quotes from gubernatorial speeches (1995-1998) highlight reasons for supporting charter schools.

**Governor Ridge** (R-PA): “Charter schools allow parents, teachers and communities to come together to design schools and curriculum targeted directly at the needs of their children. It's exciting to realize that those who seek to improve their own neighborhood public schools will have much more input and impact than the government that directs the children to attend them” (1997).

**Governor Edgar** (R-IL): “The charter schools and the Chicago Learning Zone offer an innovative approach to relieving the frustration many of our educators have told me they feel. They want more flexibility at the local level. More business involvement. More participation by parents. More bottom-up reform. Fewer top-down directives. Less of Springfield passing out the orders. Toward that end ... I also am proposing and will gladly sign legislation allowing school districts to easily obtain waivers from many burdensome and costly state mandates. Those waivers can free up instructional time. And help stimulate innovation and enhance student performance” (1995).

**Governor Whitman** (R -NJ): “Freed from the bureaucratic encumbrances of regular schools, charter schools will be able to test new teaching methods and focus more on individual subject areas” (1997).

**Governor Engler** (R-MI): “To keep our high-performance economy competitive and growing, we need to build on our efforts to lower taxes, cut red tape, and establish Renaissance Zones. ...That is one reason why this Legislature recently affirmed Michigan's landmark charter school law -- to encourage competition and innovation among public schools across our state” (1996).

**Governor Carlson** (R-MN): “Our goal has been to put children first and, at the heart of all of our reforms, is our sincere belief that there must be competition in the educational system, whether public, private or parochial, every family in America should have the right to send their children to that school that best serves their child's needs. Already, in this legislative session, there are those who seek to turn the clock back. But rest assured that, as Governor, I will do everything that I can to make certain that choice, competition, and quality continue to drive our commitment to education” (1998).

## **Unions & Charters**

When charter schools first came up for public debate, both the United Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association strongly opposed them. In recent years, these unions have softened their rhetoric and have instead negotiated with legislative leaders to develop more restrictive charter legislation.

NEA President Robert Chase views charter schools as “a halfway house en route to privatization” (Mahtesian 1998, 26). The NEA, however, did announce its support of the charter school movement in 1996 and its plans to establish its own schools. In 1998, the NEA operated five charter schools, however, among the rank and file membership, charter schools are still a controversial issue. Officials support the movement that they claim is part of the NEA’s campaign to shift from the old style of antagonistic labor-management relations to a new style of collaboration (Schnaiberg 1998). Still, many NEA affiliates have vigorously opposed charter school legislation.

Union opposition to charters is primarily based on two factors: the use of tax dollars for experimental schools and the possibility of teachers losing contract protections. Charter opponents claim that charter schools have a detrimental effect on public education by diverting public funds from regular schools to charter schools, thereby reducing educational opportunities for some students. Another concern of unions is that charter schools may not ensure teacher job security or benefits, traditional areas of union protection. State charter school laws vary on the issues of certification and collective bargaining with some giving charter teachers the right to a contract and others not conferring the right (Schnaiberg 1998). Strong teachers unions in New Jersey, Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, California, and Pennsylvania have compelled politicians to negotiate with them about the charter school bills. Even weaker teachers unions in Georgia and Texas have managed to influence the shape of the charter legislation. As a result of union influence, several state laws contain concessions such as more job protections and requirements for certified teachers. A recent study of California charter schools found that most continue to employ teachers with regular state credentials, and while most teachers in conversion schools belong to unions, most in start-up schools do not (Wells 1998).

The teachers’ unions in Pennsylvania staged a massive protest against Governor Ridge’s failed voucher and charter proposals. Many believe these initiatives crashed because the governor did not consult with the teachers’ unions. The executive director of the House

Education Committee referring to the governor said, “it’s no secret that he thinks the teachers unions are the enemy.” Another respondent alleged, “the Ridge Administration centers on union bashing” (Interview 1996). In 1997 Ridge created a less controversial bill in cooperation with the unions that preserved job protections for public school employees; it passed with the support of all unions save the School Board Association.

### **Michigan Education Association**

The Michigan Education Association (MEA) had reservations about charter schools. The MEA wants to ensure they are public and require licensed teachers and is concerned with oversight because there is no mechanism for monitoring performance of the schools. The union advocated for legislation to study the outcomes of charter schools and will monitor schools for compliance with the law. A charter school teacher recently resigned because the school required the teaching of religious materials. Indeed, there are schools established by fundamentalist Christians as well as a school that doesn’t believe in the use of technology. The MEA is also concerned about for-profit businesses such as the Edison Project in Duluth that operate charter schools. Their main concern, however, is that charter schools will divert public funds from the public education system.

### **California Teachers Association**

The California Teachers Association (CTA) resisted measures to raise the charter school cap for years but changed its position and supported the May 1998 bill that liberalized the charter school law. As a result of negotiations, the CTA gained amendments requiring charter schools to hire certified teachers and strengthening financial oversight of the schools. The CTA vowed to continue its fight for collective bargaining for charter teachers (Johnston 1998a). California’s charter school bill allows, but does not require, charter schools to engage in collective bargaining with teachers. The California teachers’ unions opposed the charter school legislation that was proposed in 1992, but the threat of a voucher initiative made them less opposed. They did support a later version of the bill. Generally, the unions in California support charters if they guarantee teacher tenure, pensions, benefits, and collective bargaining. The United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) has supported charter schools in Los Angeles and viewed them as a safety valve to avoid vouchers, not serious reform.

In Minnesota the teachers unions were strongly opposed to the charter bill, but according to one observer they miscalculated the political climate and lost political credibility as a result (Interview 1997). In some states such as Illinois, the UFT and NEA are split over the charter issue. The Illinois Education Association initially opposed the bill because it permits the use of uncertified teachers, but when it became apparent that the bill would pass they supported it (Interview 1997).

Despite their vocal resistance to the idea of charter schools, the unions in almost every state eventually had to offer at least lukewarm support for charter schools. In many states the unions have been accused of resisting any school reforms that challenge their power, but wide public support has made it politically difficult for the unions to reject wholesale the establishment of charter schools.

The fact that the unions in many of the states (New Jersey, Minnesota, California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania) initially opposed charter schools and later changed their position to support them with restrictions may testify to the increasing strength of the opposition. Moreover, in the aftermath of battling voucher proposals, the unions were not in a strong position to also oppose charter schools. The NEA and AFT are both adamantly opposed to vouchers which they consider to be an “unprecedented assault on public education” (Greenhouse 1998).

Like teachers’ unions, professional associations like the State Superintendents’ Association, the Principals Association, etc ... also oppose charter schools to protect their interests while the School Board Association protests those elements that limit their local power. Professional associations often work with the teachers’ unions in a coalition to oppose charters, although this alliance can be unsteady when compromises have to be struck with legislators.

# Unions and Charter Legislation

Teachers' unions had significant influence over Michigan's charter school legislation. Charters were one of a series of school choice proposals in Michigan. Republican Governor Engler worked, albeit with little success, to pass legislation creating voucher programs and allowing public school choice. Vouchers, proposed in 1993, were opposed by the teachers' unions while Engler's public school choice plan was opposed by both Democratic legislators and Republicans representing suburbanites who didn't want to jeopardize their schools, the best in the state. Inhabitants of the suburbs created by White flight in the 1960s "often confuse choice with the forced busing threats of the 1960s and 70s" (Bray 1995, n.p.). Even though the proposals didn't include a transportation provision, Republican legislators from "suburban districts close to large urban areas, read that Grosse Point, Birmingham, Farmington, Southfield, etc--are getting heat from thorny constituents who don't trust politicians who promise they won't ever bus kids across district lines once they have [the legislation] up and running" (Interview 1995). A Michigan Education Association (MEA) representative said that "choice fell because the wealthy White Republican districts wanted to opt out of the state school system" (Interview 1995).

The first charter bill passed in 1993 but was challenged in court by the teachers unions and the American Civil Liberties Union which claimed charter schools were unconstitutional because they used state funds and were not regulated by the Board of Education. In its November 1994 decision the court agreed and ruled that charter schools should not receive public funds. The governor responded with a new charter law that contained stricter state regulations. This law allows state universities and community colleges to create schools and places no limit on the number allowed in the state. As of January 1998 there were 108 charter schools operating in Michigan (Heritage Foundation 1998c). Local boards could start new programs and develop new procedures, the core curriculum was eliminated, and teacher certification was not required.

## **Business & Charter Schools**

The business community in each state has been supportive of charter schools. They are ideologically receptive to market-style reforms and also appreciate efforts at experimentation. The old, industrial-era family foundations have been the traditional benefactors of education reform, however a new generation of foundations are funding charter schools. Among them, as previously stated, are Donald and Doris Fisher, founders of The Gap Inc., who pledged \$25 million to help the San Francisco public schools hire the Edison Project. Shopping mall developer A. Alfred Taubman has worked on launching the Leona Group, a for profit charter school operation based in Michigan. Also in Michigan, manufacturer and evangelical Christian J.C. Huizenga founded the National Heritage Academies which operates eight charter schools in Grand Rapids that emphasize “traditional values.” The Walton family, heirs to the Wal-Mart fortune, donated over \$16 million to charter schools nationally, and contributed over \$4 million to Children's Educational Opportunity Foundation which provides vouchers for to attend private schools (Walton Family Foundation 2000).

### **The Business Community in New Jersey**

The corporate community in New Jersey is unified in support of vouchers and charter schools. Governor Whitman allied with corporations in support of charter schools. She also found the support she needed for reelection from the New Jersey Education Association after their demands (certification of all teachers, job protection, and tenure) were met in the bill. Through their foundations, corporations can receive tax breaks from their involvement with charter schools, influence curriculum, and establish a recruitment pool.

The major New Jersey businesses involved with charter schools are the Prudential Corporation, IBM, Dodge Corporation, and AT&T. According to information obtained through several interviews, the corporate community is unified in its support of voucher programs and charter schools. They influence charter schools through their foundations that communicate with each other through the Charter School Resource Center and the Department of Innovative Programs in the State Department of Education. The Dodge Foundation has been involved with funding several charter school projects. Their efforts to promote charter schools have been well accepted by the education commission and other state officials. They believe that charter schools are “one way to attain greater equity” (Interview 1996).

In general, corporations consider charter schools to be good opportunities to become more involved with local communities which often view them as uncaring and out of touch with local needs. Most of their involvement has been at the state level because this is where they can get the tax breaks and building subsidies they seek. However they also want to establish a connection with communities, and to that end, they have sought to generate support for charter school legislation among urban community residents through community organizations. Some members of the business community feel that the state has not provided them with a structure for access.

### **The Business Community in Minnesota**

The business community in Minnesota is organized to influence education policy through the Minnesota Business Partnership, a coalition of 105 CEOs primarily based in the Twin Cities. The Partnership has been an active supporter of charter schools and vouchers. They supported the governor's 1997 tax credit by running a well-funded, heavily advertised voucher campaign, testifying, working with legislators, and coordinating a grassroots lobbying effort that brought students and parents into the process.

### **The Business Community in California**

In California, the Business Roundtable and the Chamber of Commerce were instrumental in getting the charter school legislation passed in 1992. An alliance of high-tech companies, the Technology Network, was instrumental in getting the 1,000,000 signatures necessary for the citizen initiative to expand the charter school law (which it did in May of 1998). The purpose of Technology Network is to build relationships between technology executives and politicians in order to encourage the development of public policies that will benefit technology enterprises. Their members include CEOs and presidents of over 100 of the leading technology companies, venture capital, investment banks, and law firms. Charter school policy is their priority.

### **Charter Schools and Vouchers**

Some activists have philosophically linked charter schools to voucher programs. Both are forms of school choice, although charters do not broadly include private schools. Some believe charter schools pave the way for voucher programs, the final step toward complete school choice. Six of the governors in the case study states supported vouchers (exceptions are Democratic Governors Glendening and Miller and Republican Governor Edgar.)

In New Jersey, Governor Whitman wanted voucher programs but sensing opposition, she pushed for charter schools instead. After two voucher proposals in Pennsylvania failed, Governor Ridge actively pushed for charter schools. In 1997 Governor Bush of Texas initiated a modified voucher proposal supported by several conservative and religious right organizations.

California's Governor Wilson supported "opportunity scholarships" vouchers for 15,000 low-income students in the lowest-performing school districts to attend private schools. California's current governor, Gray Davis, who heavily relied on union support in his election, is opposed to vouchers and is more responsive to union concerns. Unlike other governors in the study, Democrat Governor Miller of Georgia fought against vouchers. Minnesota's Governor Carlson initially opposed vouchers and thereafter never actively pursued them. Minnesota embraced the concept of school choice in 1988 when it established statewide open enrollment, and it is unlikely the new governor, Jesse Ventura, will oppose that policy. The Minnesota tax reduction program, in which parents can claim a tax deduction for non-tuition educational expenses for private or public schools, is a diluted form of vouchers. Supporters of charters and vouchers have ranged from African-American and Latino activists to the Catholic Church to members of the religious right, the latter two seeking public funds to support their own schools.

In states in which voucher programs are politically unfeasible, they have been established on a small scale by private entities. Similar to the independent voucher program in Georgia, a private organization in New Jersey, the Scholarship Fund for Inner-City Children, established a voucher program to pay for low-income students to attend Catholic secondary schools in Newark (Heritage Foundation 1998e). In Philadelphia, the Partnership for Educational Choice, an alliance between the Pennsylvania Manufacturing Association and the Urban League, awards scholarships to low-income children to attend private schools (Heritage Foundation 1998f). The Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) Foundation in Texas, funded by corporate sponsors such as the USAA Federal Savings Bank, Valero Energy Corporation, and Don King Productions, gives half-time scholarships to over 2,000 poor children. CEO Michigan has awarded scholarships to urban, low-income students since 1992. Wall Street philanthropist Ted Forstmann has pledged vouchers to 5,000 children in Los Angeles good for four years of education (Heritage Foundation 1998a).

People for the American Way (PFAW) maintains that the corporate-funded voucher movement is deliberately attempting "to pave the way to creating a system of publicly funded school vouchers" (PFAW 1998). PFAW alleges that the agenda of the corporate-funded voucher movement is to weaken support for public education and peddle "their programs as models for *publicly* funded school vouchers (PFAW 1998). Some public education activists believe public schools are undergoing a public relations crisis while market based school choice solutions are

being championed by corporations. University of Wisconsin education professor Alex Molnar says vouchers and charter schools are unnecessary reforms that “have nothing to do with improving the quality of public education” but, instead, are based on an “ideological premise” that “competition and the marketplace necessarily produce improvement” (Huber 1997, 34)

### **Role of Cities in Charter Movement**

Although there were several key urban, minority charter school proponents including mayors and urban non-profit groups, our interviews did not reveal broad support for these measures in cities. Bringing certain minority urban actors into the charter school coalition was a popular political strategy, and many of the first charter schools were in cities. In Minneapolis, two urban non-profit organizations, ACORN and the Urban Coalition, operate charter schools.

Henig found that proponents of market-based approaches to school reform often present initiatives as a means of cutting costs or as being targeted to the neediest because “such provisions may be necessary to construct a viable winning coalition” (Henig 1998, 8). Others claim there is a history of minority support for voucher programs in cities. The trend in some states, Texas, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, was to initially target charter schools to urban, at-risk populations. Three of the six charter schools in Pennsylvania are alternative schools taking students the school districts could no longer serve, and one was sort of an extension of Head Start. Fifty-three percent of the students enrolled in Michigan’s charter schools are minorities. Charters there cater to pregnant teens, students at risk of dropping out, students with learning disabilities, and Native Americans on reservations (Heritage Foundation 1998d). Once charter programs were established in Texas and Minnesota school districts, they broadened the program to other districts and population groups.

Our interviews did not identify mayors as influential in pushing for this state-level reform. City school advocates were more interested in other reforms such as equity financing. Newark Mayor Sharpe James has been uninvolved in education since the New Jersey’s takeover of the city’s school district. He supports the charter movement as a positive alternative for troubled school systems such as Newark’s, but Mayor James prefers education costs be paid out of the state income tax budget instead of the city’s property tax revenue which often falls short of its needs (Herszenhorn 1998). New Jersey’s state capitol, Trenton, had seven charter schools in September 1998, but the Superintendent anticipated they would have a devastating effect on the

existing public schools. In Philadelphia, some urban leaders were critical of the four charter schools that were expected to increase the city's debt by \$6 million dollars. One strong voice in opposition to lifting the cap on the number of charter schools in California was that of Assemblyman Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles) whose district contains low-income, predominantly minority areas of the city. He called the bill "a crock" noted it would benefit middle class children and "leave poor children worse off than before" (State Net Capitol Journal 1998, n.p.).

### **Equity and Charters: City Reform?**

Funding formulas for charter schools vary from state to state. Some states fund charters directly while other states redirect funds from the districts to the charter schools. Some funding schemes follow the formula for regular public schools. Michigan is one such state; eighty percent of funding comes from the state and twenty percent from the locality. In New Jersey, charters have been funded by the school district. Notably, there has been opposition to this scheme from districts and existing schools because of the loss of funds when students switch to charter schools. Specifically, the effect of charter schools on district budgets has caused concern in New Jersey's suburban areas. Resultant was that Princeton Regional Superintendent Robert Ginsberg called for charter schools to be financed directly by the state because they diverted monies from existing schools. Pennsylvania and Georgia also funded charter schools from district budgets while in Texas a mix of district and state funds has been employed.

There are other equity issues as well. California's law requires priority be given to schools serving low-achieving students. However Wells (1998) found that the amount of public funding received by California charter schools ranges widely between districts and even among schools within a district. Some states have used charter schools to address discrepancies between rich and poor districts. For example, in the first year of its program eleven of the thirteen charter schools in New Jersey were in city districts. Minnesota similarly targeted its charters to cities while in Texas charter schools serve primarily minority and low-income students (Heritage Foundation 1998g). Most of Illinois' charter schools are in Chicago.

Other states, including California, have not made a concerted effort to use charter schools to target minority populations although there are some charters in low-performing districts. There is evidence that charters in California may actually increase racial segregation. A recent

study of California charter schools found that White students are over-represented by eight percent while Latino students were under-represented by six percent. The racial disparity was greater in some districts where the enrollment of White students exceeded the district average by over twenty-five percent (Wells 1998).

In defense of charter schools, Joe Nathan maintains that they are more equitable than the present system of public education in which wealthy suburbanites have access to the best schools. He argues that good school choice plans must not be restrictive in any way such as through the use of an admissions test. Only poorly designed school choice plans, according to Nathan, promote inequity. He maintains that unlike magnet schools and similar restrictive systems charter schools are not inherently elitist (Nathan, personal communication).

### **Charter Schools: The Changing of the Guard?**

The charter school movement was, and continues to be, a challenge to the entrenched state education regimes. The key players in the old regime including the professionals, unions, and local school boards are being challenged by new active regime participants. Charter schools pose a threat to the old regime because they posit an alternative educational system that operates outside the established parameters. This means that the balance of power in education politics is changing with new actors gaining influence while old ones lose. Still, however, key voices are missing from the chorus. Some would argue the charter school movement can be seen to foster participation among several groups traditionally not involved in education politics. However, the plurality of voices is not yet close to a critical mass. As evidenced herein, charter schools vary widely from state to state. Thus, participation too varies from state to state.

Charter schools do rely on a higher level of parent and teacher involvement than regular public schools as many schools require parental participation and may exclude children if parents are unwilling or unable to fulfill this mandate. Over half of the parents of New Jersey charter school students volunteer their time or serve on a school committee (Kane 1998). One California charter even requires volunteer service and fines parents if they miss a meeting (Rothstein 1998). Teachers are also expected to be involved in more aspects of school management and decision making. In the words of one teacher, "It's a real question. Can a school like this survive and be successful only with a heroic level of energy, dedication, and even self-sacrifice?" (Rothstein 1998, 57). More evidence of a changing of the guard, or at least some of it.

Charter schools are new, alternative, and reformist but they do not seek system-wide reform. They merely seek to upset the status quo. Many of the governors settled for charter schools when they couldn't get the support needed for voucher programs. Charters can be a less radical manifestation of a market-based ideology. In some states they represent the ascendance of the moderate, bipartisan political coalition that creates partnerships with business and prefers the market model instead of the government model. A model without guarantees, equity, or equality of opportunity or outcomes. In the end what we may have is all followers, few real leaders, and educational privatization becoming ever more pervasive.

## CITIES AND STATE EDUCATION REGIMES

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### Introduction

As part of our nine-state study of state education regimes, we specifically focused on the cities to determine what school constituency groups were doing in their local communities. Our interest centered on the quantity of groups that functioned at the school and city level, whether they worked in coalition with other groups on district-wide issues, and their priorities. Our findings helped shed light on the dearth of action by city school advocates at the state level.

There were, in fact, few active school advocacy organizations in the cities. There were many groups who had been advocates and now did program and service delivery. Many were established neighborhood groups with long-standing leadership and membership rolls. Neighborhood groups were more likely to have members that were African American or Latino, but they were not likely to work together or to form coalitions at the city wide level. Membership and activism at the neighborhood level was limited and agendas somewhat static. Public officials had little knowledge of, or contact with, neighborhood or individual school groups. School professionals and elites were likely to interact only with district wide school advocates who were White and middle class. Race was a defining variable in the organization of constituencies, and it determined networks and status in the policy arena district-wide in the city and in the state. Support for constituency-building among these groups did not take into account basic elements of their function in civil society, in the relevance of engaging broader participation as an expansion of democratic processes or the value of building social capital within their organizations, and in networking with other groups in their communities. They lacked a framework for their own purpose and role in a democratic society.

Education is ultimately a state function. City schools are reliant upon state funding and support, and the ability of city leaders to influence state leaders is vital to receiving necessary funds. Research indicated that community organizing encounters many barriers including racial divisions, institutional blocks, and a lack of resources. Importantly, we found that whatever citywide advocacy groups exist are often run by Whites in mostly non-White cities. We also assessed the influence of key city-level players in education policy including politicians, business groups, advocacy groups and unions. With few exceptions, we found the cities do not

have much influence at the state level. Moreover, as earlier stated, advocacy groups are not in coalition at the city level or statewide.

Seven of our nine states have post-industrial cities. They include Los Angeles, Newark, Detroit, Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore, and Minneapolis/St. Paul. These cities contain high concentrations of poverty and minority populations, and they have similar city school needs. Atlanta has conditions similar to those cities but also has a sizable middle class within the city. Texas is the most atypical with poor and minority populations spread throughout the state and many smaller cities.

These cities operate within states that are usually hostile towards urban concerns. In fact, within the United States there is a long tradition of bias against cities. Most states deliberately located their capitals in towns far from the largest cities. In fact, some argue that the U.S. capitol was built in a rural area rather than one of the existing cities because of an agrarian, Jeffersonian idea that cities are corrupt (Elkins and McKittrick 1993). The reforms of the Progressive Era challenged entrenched urban political power, and state action ousted most of the city machines. One such reform was the professionalization of education that served to insulate decision making from the community. This anti-city tradition continues today, and in our research we found state governments often loathe to help cities by supplementing their scarce resources. This anti-city tradition in popular culture and state political arrangements is in constant evidence in each of these states. Other than the occasional mayor or rare coalition, city-based actors evinced little influence in education politics at the state level.

### **Community-Based Organizing for School Reform**

Advocacy groups and parent organizations are clearly stakeholders in local education politics. They can be important and often solitary critics of the city regime. The composition of the advocacy community differs greatly from city to city. However, we identified three basic patterns: the one local advocacy group domination model, the multi-local advocacy group model, and the non-existent advocacy group model.

In *Black Mayors and School Politics* Wilbur Rich describes advocacy groups as part of the public school cartel which prevents real reform from happening in urban schools. According to Rich, community activists are recruited to support school board policies, to give the pretense of community involvement, and to work on school board elections. Rather than being critics of

the local school districts, they instead become cheerleaders of the status quo. Despite Rich's findings, we found selected, very active, oppositional groups including the previously mentioned Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in Texas, the Education Law Center in Newark, and the Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth. These groups were often very harsh critics of the city system; their reach, however, did not extend to the state capital.

A local advocacy group model was most apparent in Texas is the Industrial Areas Foundation which established strong organizations in many of the cities in Texas. Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) and Metro are two IAF groups in San Antonio. They have a long tradition of encouraging parent participation and questioning school board decisions.

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In the states studied, Texan urban issues were the least articulated at the state level. This is because of structural and practical reasons. First, cities in Texas are different from the other cities in our study. There is no one central core with concentrations of poor minorities in Texas as is typical in Rust Belt communities. Problems associated with cities, e.g., poverty, non-native English speakers etc ..., are spread throughout the state. Cities in Texas are also very different from one another. Dallas has far different educational needs from San Antonio, for example. As one interviewee said, "There's an absence of a single major dominating metropolitan city ...it would be nice to have a battle if we felt we could win it. The cities operate within larger coalitions and those coalitions promote harmony. I grew up in Pennsylvania, so I know that in some states the metro city can be posed against the rest of the state - that doesn't happen in Texas" (Interview 1996).

Second, like other states in our study the cities do not have political leaders to articulate their interests. Mayors and city councils have no formal control over education and rarely take public stances on education issues. Most advocacy groups do not work on the behalf of urban areas, as much of the poor and minority populations are not concentrated in cities, but are spread across a region. "There's not a lot of organized constituency to impact at city and state level" (Interview 1997).

Third, suburban and rural interests dominate the state government. Advocates told us that lobbying solely on the behalf of cities would be a losing cause. They said they were better off forming coalitions with suburban and rural areas to jointly work toward reform. City school districts had once formed a coalition called the Texas Urban School Alliance, but it was quickly enlarged to also include suburban districts.

## **Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF)**

The dominant urban grass-roots advocacy group in Texas is the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF), a branch of the national IAF. The Southwest regional director, Ernesto Cortes, is well known throughout the state. When asked why there are so few community level groups in Texas other than IAF, one interviewee said, "there are few foundations in Texas and they give to safe groups. Everybody wants IAF to do everything" (Interview 1997).

TIAF is a network of ten organizations located in our three Texas study cities, Austin, Houston, and San Antonio. The Houston group is less influential while another group, unaffiliated with TIAF, Houstonians for Public Education, is more prominent. TIAF's Austin group, Austin Interfaith, has been described as one of the city's most powerful political organizations and was voted "best advocacy group" in Austin in the 1995 *Austin Chronicle's* readers' poll. San Antonio has two IAF branch groups: COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service) and Metro Alliance. COPS was the first IAF organization in Texas. The Metro Alliance has an education partnership that provides scholarships and jobs to selected high school graduates; they collaborate with COPS and the Alliance schools on this partnership. COPS and Metro Alliance have worked to get state funding committed for grants for which Alliance schools could apply. The grants provide funding for staff, parent and community development, implementation materials, and enrichment programs for students. Their main educational goal has been to secure increased and continued funding for Alliance Schools.

The Alliance Schools Initiative began in 1992 when five of Austin's lowest achieving elementary schools formed a partnership with Austin Interfaith, campus staff and parents, school district officials, regional Education Service Centers, and the Texas Education Agency. This program provides additional state funding for these schools, funding which can be used to train teachers and parents.

IAF has been very successful in gaining state and local funds for these schools. The legislature set aside an \$8 million capital investment fund for this purpose, a \$3 million increase over the previous session's allocation. Austin Interfaith also persuaded the city to commit funding for an after-school enrichment program, a summer youth employment program, and school-linked health care. COPS and Metro in San Antonio have done the same.

IAF groups also hold accountability sessions, large public assemblies where school board candidates, local politicians, and administrators are asked to publicly commit to the stated goals of the organization and community. They work to create political organizations in low-income communities across the country. TIAF was influential in the passage of state H.R. 72 in 1984 "in which the state legislature authorized more than \$1 billion in additional funding for schools, much of which would go to schools serving poor children" (Murnane 1996, 86).

New Jersey and Minnesota could be categorized as belonging to the one local advocacy group domination model or at least exhibiting most elements of that model. The Education Law Center and the Coalition for a Thorough and Efficient Education, which share a common office, are the primary advocacy groups in Newark. The Urban League, which works on issues in addition to education, is Minneapolis's main advocacy group. It has made education a priority, attacked the governor for the poor performance of minority students, and is a member of the governor's committee on education.

We identified, as belonging to the multi-local advocacy group model, cities that are home to more than five major local groups that focused on city education. Philadelphia, for example, had at least forty advocacy groups with some interest in improving education. Many of these groups are aimed at addressing particular school-level problems. They considered themselves the superintendent's and other local administrators' watchdogs but had not involved themselves significantly in city-level politics. The groups that have the most local impact are Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth (PCCY), Parents Union for Public Schools, Parents United for Better Schools, and Alliance Organizing Project. Other cities that fit into the multi-local advocacy model are Chicago, Atlanta, and Los Angeles.

The weak or non-existent advocacy group model was most applicable to Detroit. The few local groups that were involved in education were sponsored by the business community or by the school district; religious organizations also played a role. New Detroit Inc., Detroit Renaissance, and Detroit Compact, all affiliated with business, were very active in local education politics. There were no grassroots based, independent interest groups devoted to improving education in the city. This reflects the general dearth of influential grass roots organizations and activism in Detroit (Mast 1994). This may be resultant from the establishment of the New Detroit Committee, comprised of forces that were "the social antithesis of the movement led by black revolutionaries" (Georgakas and Surkin 1998, 2). Some seven years later, Detroit elected its first African American mayor, Coleman Young. Mayor Young's administration was concurrent with a shifting in Detroit's administrative power to African Americans (Henig et al 1999). However community based organizations were not part of this urban regime as Mayor Young neither sought nor welcomed their participation.

Baltimore was similar, lacking many strong city advocacy groups involved with education. Baltimoreans United in Leadership and Development (BUILD), although not

exclusively an education organization, was the exception. Marion Orr states “[BUILD] deserves the credit for creating the political environment that facilitated Schmoke’s and other leaders’ efforts in reforming the city’s school system” (Orr 1999, 81).

City advocacy groups had the most effective voice in state education policy through court cases. These groups include the NAACP in Minneapolis and the Education Law Center in Newark and Philadelphia. Many also played an important role in city politics. As a general rule, most urban advocacy groups did not organize to influence state policy. Their efforts instead were concentrated at the district or school level. Significantly, all of our state-level interviewees said local advocacy groups did not play a significant role in state politics. Many advocacy groups recognized that they were not participating in state politics. They offered many explanations for their neglect of this area. Some claimed the state capital was too conservative to be receptive to their causes while others said they did not have enough resources for such endeavors. Whether one group or many dominated did not seem to affect their ability to lobby at the state level. When there were many groups, such as in Philadelphia, foundation support for those groups was divided up, and each group therefore had less money for political activity. When one group dominated, as in Texas, things were little different; advocates still focused their efforts on issues at the school district level. Chicago’s advocacy community had a significant effect on state politics during the development of the 1988 reform, but after that reform was passed their influence diminished. These findings raise serious questions regarding the negative effects of the devolution of education to the states. Cities will be even more disadvantaged as a result of limited city-motivated action in state capitols.

### **Philadelphia Advocacy Community**

None of the advocacy groups in Philadelphia were described as major state-level players in our interviews with stakeholders in Harrisburg.

The urban advocacy groups put forth several reasons for their lack of involvement. One advocate said it was pointless to get involved in state level politics. Advocates felt because Pennsylvania's state officials were mostly Republican, White, and from non-urban areas, it was impossible for any action of theirs to make a difference. Philadelphia, they decided, had to improve its schools itself and prove to the governor and the legislature that the city was serious about education policy (Interview 1997).

Another group complained about not having the staff or the time to spend on lobbying or the coalition building needed to do state level advocacy. The director of a Philadelphia advocacy group told us that there were too many small groups in Philadelphia with their own particular focus. Because there are so many groups dividing up foundation money, no one group had the time or the money to organize coalitions. Many advocacy groups recently lost a lot of funds from the business community because many firms had decided to devote their charitable efforts to other groups, those supported by the Annenberg Foundation. Because the Annenberg Foundation offered matching funds for donations to groups it sponsored, other groups saw their sources of financial support dry up. One interviewee said she had lost her administrator, and now she is forced to type all her own letters. "I know that I should meet with other groups, but I don't have time" (Interview 1996).

### **Chicago Advocacy Community**

Illinois is one of the few states where city community organizations have been organized, effective, and relatively consistent participants in the state education policy-making process. They were, without question, instrumental to the success of the 1988 legislation, and they continued to fight for increased funding for Chicago Public Schools and for increased Local School Council (LSC) autonomy for several years following the initial reform bill. Much of this is attributable to Chicago's strong history of community and political organizing as well as civic engagement. Part of their success also results from their access to funding for state-level activities and their alliance with Chicago businesses.

Changes in the shared agenda of Chicago businesses and community organizations combined with changes in state-level politics led to a decline in community influence and participation in state level education policy making. For the most part, the reform organizations focused on developing, supporting, and sustaining the local school councils and their process. This required considerable energy and resources, and included guarding the LSCs from attacks on their power before they have had time to have an impact. The entire reform itself requires an amazing amount of civic energy to sustain. In the process, less attention has been paid to state-level politics. Some have said that the advocacy community in Chicago has been cooped by the city. Vallas has contracts with several of the strongest groups, including Leadership for Quality Education, UNO and PURE, and several leaders within the African American community (Interview 1997). Meanwhile, Chicago business groups continued to press Springfield for deeper changes in the Chicago school system and vigorously supported the 1995 reform. They saw this as an extension of the 1988 reform. However, differing responses between business groups and reform organizations, to the Vallas administration, highlight a growing chasm between the agendas for school reform. The lack of community organization participation in the present school finance debates signals a shift in the role of Chicago community organizations in Illinois education policy.

## **Community Advocacy Coalitions**

This study found that community-based education advocacy groups from urban areas were not regime participants at the state or city level. In a few states like Illinois there is evidence of state level advocacy by urban community groups, but these groups are rarely considered influential. It is important to note that according to experts on community organizing, education advocacy groups must be organized into coalitions in order to be effective in city and state politics. At the city level, these advocacy groups need to be in coalition to participate in urban regimes (Orr 1996; Gittell 1994). Coalition formation is also an example of social capital, and the development of the lasting networks characteristic of social capital could influence education politics. Our research found a distinct lack of effective citywide coalitions for education in the cities. Three factors seem to contribute to the absence of coalitions: racial divisions among neighborhoods or in city politics; existing structures and laws such as school boards or state takeovers; and/or the lack of resources such as the support of foundations and businesses.

None of these cities had strong citywide coalitions. Education groups in Philadelphia and Chicago engage in state-level political activism, with limited success. In Chicago, a school reform coalition had been a strong influence over the 1986 reform. After this was institutionalized in the form of Local School Councils (LSCs) the coalition waned. The individual advocacy organizations continued to protect local school councils but did not work together very often. There is a new group, the Cooperative, which has tried to revive the coalition. In the face of challenges from Chicago's Mayor Daley who sought to amend the powers of local school councils, organizations again began to act as a coalition. These organizations lobby in Springfield but do not have enough strength to stop a policy favored by the mayor and legislative Republicans.

Newark does not have a strong advocacy coalition because it has only one citywide advocacy group. Other groups work solely within their own neighborhoods. The structure of Newark schools, long under state control, also discourages community participation.

Philadelphia advocacy groups comprise the Pennsylvania Campaign for Public Education, a coalition that does statewide lobbying. At the city level, the groups are not in a strong coalition. There are some networks of affiliated groups that meet together regularly, but they do not agree on policy actions and are not considered to be part of the city regime.

Baltimore has many neighborhood groups but no education coalition. BUILD (Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development), a church-based city-wide advocacy group, works on several policy issues and was very influential in school reform in the early 1990s (Orr 1999). BUILD has a deliberate policy of not participating in coalitions (Interview 1999). The Baltimore Education Network links education groups but does not take policy positions. As in other cities we studied, the citywide groups or coalitions do not organize parents or encourage widespread participation and activism.

It is unlikely that the cities of Chicago, Philadelphia, Newark, and Baltimore are exceptions to the rule and provide unique examples of education organizing. Rather, it is clear that participation in citywide coalitions by bottom-up organizations is rare and difficult to sustain. This inability to form strong coalitions that participate in city education regimes may be explained by three conditions found in every city: racial differences, institutional structures, and a lack of resources.

Cities and their organizations are divided racially. For example, the neighborhoods of a city are often highly segregated; neighborhood organizing follows accordingly. In Newark, the wards are usually African American, Latino, or Portuguese with much conflict and little cooperation among them politically. One organizer reported that in Newark that “each group has their own fiefdom” (Interview 1999). As a result of this segregation, there is no effective citywide advocacy group or coalition. In Philadelphia, some groups have effectively organized at the local level. This includes Asian-Americans United (AAU) located in Chinatown and the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project located in a section with mostly lower-income White residents. There are also groups in predominantly African American sections. These groups meet together regularly and are members of the citywide Alliance Organizing Project. The AAU, however, suggested that they do not share agendas with anyone else. Their parent members often do not speak English and therefore have trouble participating in citywide projects (Interview 1999). The Asian group once worked with the African-American community to protest the closing of a public library, but this partnership did not endure. We found that neighborhoods dominated by different ethnicities had trouble working together.

Further, community organizing in the cities would empower minority groups, and some suspect that this threatens White governance structures. We found that citywide groups are dominated by Whites while the city neighborhoods are mostly non-White. One Baltimore

activist stated that “most community organizations are led by White professionals. But the parents are low-income and Black” (Interview 1999). This may create a barrier of responsiveness to the community that is reflected in advocacy goals. For example, in Chicago only one citywide group had African American leadership. A member of that group was our sole interviewee to suggest that the mayor’s education agenda of centralizing power and undermining the Local School Councils had a racial component (Interview 1999). All of our other White interviewees said racism is not a problem with the Chicago mayor or within city education politics. This may indicate a lack of sensitivity in a city whose students are overwhelmingly African American. In Philadelphia, one interviewee suggested that community organizing was discouraged due to racism. Empowering inner-city communities threatens stability and entrenched regimes, and it is easy to conclude that those who benefit from the status quo will protect it. This conflicts directly with stated efforts to enhance social capital among African American and Latino groups in these cities.

In defense of the status quo, city government institutions make community organization and coalition building more difficult. In every city there are few points of access for organized parents to influence schools. Often, the school system provides patronage jobs used by local politicians; parental participation in the school system threatens this perk. Among the cities in this study, only Chicago enacted a citywide school reform policy creating the Local School Councils to enhance citizen and parent participation. Yet, even in Chicago the advocacy groups organize little outside the LSC structure. Once the reform passed, there was less need for a coalition. In other cities, the advocacy groups report that city institutions discourage community organization. Some cities are subject to central takeovers from politicians. In Baltimore, activists found that the access points to local school boards were removed. In Baltimore, one parent organizer reports that the school system is “hierarchical” and is a barrier to organization (Interview 1999). It is easy for parents to become discouraged if nobody is listening, further imperiling coalitions that might form.

In Philadelphia, the superintendent holds regular meetings with the activist groups, but activist leaders simply repeat the same demands at every meeting. In that city, the superintendent controls a major source of funding for school advocacy, the Annenberg Challenge Grant. This is, according to the Annenberg Foundation, a “\$500 million, five-year challenge grant ... designed to energize, support and replicate successful school reform throughout the

country” (Annenberg Foundation 2000). Philadelphia, one of the challenge sites, received a \$50 million two-for-one matching grant. This money is directed to some advocacy groups but not others, creating resentment among groups, discouraging coalitions. According to one interviewee, there is a feeling that some Philadelphia groups are insiders while others are outsiders (Interview 1999). This divisiveness undermines the coalitions that are necessary for stronger advocacy at the state level. Newark, Baltimore, and Chicago are also under takeovers from the state or city.

Another factor that discourages coalition building is the scarcity of resources. Community advocates depend on foundations and businesses for funding, and any coalition umbrella group would require funding as well. We found that sources of advocacy funding became scarce in the 1990s. Some cities have no history of business activism, but nonprofits in cities with a history of business activism experienced less support. The business sector has lost interest in funding grassroots organizing projects at the city level. In Chicago, it was a major contributor to the school reform of 1988 but receded as goals became less clear. According to one interviewee, the Chicago business community was interested in fighting unions and their influence on education policy because they felt institutions such as tenure for principals are inefficient (Interview 1999). The Chicago groups complained about the withdrawal of foundation dollars. Their school reform required constant attention, but the foundations soon began to refuse to fund LSC elections every two years. The coalition of advocacy groups fell apart during this time, but a revival was being attempted. In other cities, the Annenberg foundation affected advocacy funding often by drawing away business matching funds and by targeting specific groups. The effect of this strategy may have undermined the formation of coalitions in some cities. Moreover, our research found that some long-standing organizations act as gatekeepers to funding and monopolize activism in a city. The Annenberg grants assisted Philadelphia organizers in starting some effective new advocacy groups (Interview 1999).

In short, it can be difficult to overcome an established organization that intimidates newcomers. The older groups may have forgone strong advocacy in favor of service delivery for which there is more stable funding.

## **The Urban Regime and its Power at the State Level**

We found many differences between city education regimes among our cities beyond the community advocacy groups. Some cities had a superintendent and board-centered regime, and in other cities the mayor was a more significant participant. The role of the business sector varied while unions were consistent. The greatest involvement of grassroots groups and individuals interested in education was in evidence in Chicago, Baltimore, and Philadelphia while Detroit, Atlanta, Houston, Newark, and Minneapolis/St. Paul were less active. In every city the teachers' union was directly involved in local school politics. Although our immediate concentration in this research was about the articulation of city interests at the state level, we did obtain interesting findings about the politics of education within cities.

We found that our cities had a wide variety of stakeholders involved with urban education, but they lacked strong representation within state education regimes. In short, power within the city does not translate to power at the state level. When state-level interviewees were asked to name the most influential individuals or groups inside or outside of government city participants were rarely mentioned.

### **Mayors**

Mayors had formal and informal power over education in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Baltimore. In other cities, however, the mayors had neither formal nor informal powers over education and often had little involvement in education policy. Cities with weak mayoral influence over education included Atlanta, Houston, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Newark.

Wilbur Rich has written that mayors avoid involvement in education politics for fear of disturbing the powerful public school cartel which includes a coalition of professional school administrators, union leaders, school board administrators, and school activists (1996). This group resists real reform because it interferes with existing power relations. In contrast to Rich's conclusions, we found evidence of three strong mayors who challenged the status quo and evinced strength at the state level.

Of our three strong mayors, Schموke of Baltimore and Daley of Chicago were the most involved in local education policy. The mayor of Baltimore has strong institutional powers over all city agencies and over education. In Chicago, Mayor Daley asserted his power over

education in the 1995 reform. He won budgetary control over the schools and placed several of his most trusted aides in leadership positions in the new structure. Daley named Gary Chico, former mayoral chief of staff, as board chair, and Paul Vallas, his finance director, as chief education officer. The new administration moved quickly to sign a new three-year teachers contract, take over some poor performing schools, and rework the central administrative structure. The mayor also centralized power and his administration criticized the LSCs, the product of the 1988 school reform.

Chicago

Historically, Chicago mayors have had a great deal of state-level influence because of their control over the Chicago machine and its importance to statewide Democratic success. Prior to Mayor Washington, who helped push for the school reform in Chicago in 1988, Chicago mayors rarely influenced state education policy. The 1988 reform also marked the entrance of business and community groups into the education policy making regime, as well as the related decline in power of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and the Chicago Democrats in the state legislature. Despite the expected decline in power for a Democratic mayor in a Republican state regime, Chicago's Mayor Daley became a strong participant in state education policy making, especially after the 1995 reform. Most political observers attribute this to a Republican desire to give Daley "just enough rope to hang himself" by allowing him control and responsibility without giving him any additional funding. Also his goals, such as taking over the schools and installing an education CEO, may appeal to Republicans. Daley succeeded in convincing the legislature that Chicago's Local School Councils abused their power, and he won a bill that increased his own control at the expense of local neighborhoods.

Baltimore

The mayor of Baltimore has strong institutional powers in all policy areas. The mayor controls all city agencies and indirectly determines the budget (Krefetz 1976; Orr 1996). The mayor controls the Board of Estimates which is responsible for city fiscal policy. Five members sit on this board including the mayor and two mayoral appointees and the president of the city council. The mayor appoints the city school board that runs the city education department. In an interesting example of the mayor's power, Schmoke fired his first school board president who waffled on school reform. The six city council members are elected by district.

Schmoke's involvement in education politics has been enormously influential. He made promises to Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD) during his first campaign, was involved with the equity court case, and then shared powers with the governor during the takeover of Baltimore. The Baltimore school reform plan was modeled on Chicago's 1995 takeover.

Mayor Rendell of Philadelphia also exercised significant influence over local education. He appointed most of the members of the school board (the others were nominated by previous mayors) and had a great deal of influence over superintendent nominations. Since the 1950s, the Philadelphia superintendent has been hired by the school board, a body appointed by the mayor. In every other city and town in Pennsylvania the school board is elected. Rendell's priority was improving the fiscal health of the city, at least for his first term, and he did not employ his institutional strength over the superintendent. Instead he allowed Superintendent Hornbeck much freedom in reforming the city school system.

In some cases, a strong mayor can make a difference at the state level. In late 1997, Mayor Rendell of Philadelphia worked with the superintendent and key business leaders to gain additional state funding for the school system that was in danger of going bankrupt. This effort was unsuccessful, however the mayors of Chicago and Baltimore have had more successes at the state level. In both these cities there are historic ties to the state capital and coalitions with the business community. Party factors are also significant. Mayor Daley was less successful after Republicans won control of the legislature, though he did advance important legislation. Rendell's limited effectiveness can be explained, in part, by the fact that both houses of the Pennsylvania legislature were Republican. Both houses of Maryland's legislature and the governor's mansion were in the hands of Democrats while Baltimore's Mayor Schmoke exercised influence at the state government level.

### **Superintendents and Boards**

In many of the cities in our study, the local superintendent and school board made most of the policy decisions. In Texas cities, for example, power over education policy tends to be centered on the superintendent and the school board members. In San Antonio, one interviewee said that the school board, elected by very few people, controls the operation of schools by naming principals (Interview 1997). Another interviewee said, "unaccountable school boards are a tradition in South Texas. This happens mostly in Hispanic areas. Being on the school board is a way of choosing jobs" (Interview 1997). In Texas, the local unions, mayors, and city council members are not active players in city education politics.

In Philadelphia, education politics tends to be more pluralistic than in Texas cities, but the superintendent is still an important figure. In 1995, Superintendent Hornbeck (who resigned

in 2000) initiated an ambitious reform program called Children Achieving. After a bumpy first year, during which Hornbeck had to learn to deal with Philadelphia politics, his program was strongly supported by the mayor and city council president. His major critic has been the teachers' union who challenged his accountability program for teachers and his plan to transfer seventy-five percent of the teachers and reconstitute two schools. Hornbeck's efforts to influence state policy was notably unsuccessful.

In contrast, the local superintendents and school boards often have little say in state politics when they work through their state associations. They don't have the resources or training to engage in lobbying the state legislature or negotiate with the governor. In interviews with state-level contacts local administrators were never identified as key figures in education politics.

### **City Teachers' Unions**

In cities, teachers' unions are usually important members of the local regime. Texas and Georgia, without collective bargaining rights, have less influential unions. In most cities the union is mostly likely an affiliation of the AFT. These AFT branches include the Baltimore Teachers Union, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the Detroit Federation of Teachers, the Chicago Federation of Teachers, and the Atlanta Federation of Teachers (AFT). The United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) is a combined AFT/NEA organization.

Sometimes union strength was evident through their participation in local reform efforts. For example, Mayor Schmoke gave the Baltimore Teachers Union a nonvoting seat on the city school board. Also, the UTLA were strong participants in the LEARN school reform program. More often, though, their strength manifested in challenges to local reforms. In Philadelphia, the PFT challenged Superintendent Hornbeck and his supporters over several issues. In 1996 Hornbeck attempted to increase teacher accountability, in part, by making teachers responsible for student absences and by instituting a merit pay plan. The legislative director for the PTA told us: "We have been at war with the superintendent. He's given a lot of talk, but given no support for teachers" (Interview 1997). In the spring of 1998, Superintendent Hornbeck tried to reconstitute two high schools in distress by transferring seventy-five percent of teachers. The union filed grievances with the state labor-relations board over procedural issues. In August the arbiter sided with the unions. Although Hornbeck continued to push higher standards of

accountability for teachers and administrators, relations with the teachers' union did improve (Interview 1997).

### **Illinois Urban Union Power**

There has long been animosity between the two teachers unions in Illinois, the Illinois Education Association (IEA) and the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT). The IEA considers itself an association, rather than a union (although it is affiliated with the NEA). Suburban and rural areas are represented by the IEA. It is larger and wealthier than the IFT who is based in urban areas (Rossi 1998). Chicago teachers are organized under the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), a branch of the IFT. This division has often allowed Illinois policy makers to challenge the CTU without taking on teachers unions as a whole. There is a strong affiliation between the CTU/IFT and the Democrats, while the IEA often works with Republicans. The IEA has far more clout in the state capital; this is reflected in the fact that while the IFT's PAC (political action committee) gave away about \$500,000 last election cycle, the IEA gave away \$1.2-1.5 million.

In the city, the unions and the mayor have had a great deal of influence at the state level. On issues concerning the Chicago's public schools the CTU was particularly strong due to their close identification with the Chicago Democrats and the Democratic dominance of the House of Representatives. The 1994 statewide election returned a Republican majority to both legislative houses to join a Republican governor, dramatically reducing the power of Chicago (and other) Democrats within state government. This further curtailed the power of the CTU though continuing ties between the IEA and outstate Republicans tempered the overall decline of teacher union power. Many have said the motivation behind the 1995 reform was not to help Chicago schools, but was rather a plan of the state Republicans to reduce the power of the union and to embarrass the Democratic mayor. Indeed, the reform did put a wedge between the mayor and the unions, his long time supporters (Interview 1998).

Teachers' unions are one of the strongest interest groups in every state. Yet, city teachers' unions were not often mentioned as influential players who promoted city education interests or school reform at the state capital. Why were city teachers' unions not successful in promoting the needs of city schools or prominent members of the state education regime? One reason could be that city teachers are usually represented by the AFT while teachers in the rest of the state are represented by the NEA. These two unions have long haggled over merging, and during the course of our study there was often conflict between the two groups. With a larger membership and financial resources, the NEA was clearly a stronger voice at the state level.

Another reason that city teachers' unions were unsuccessful in promoting city schools was because of a concentration on preserving teacher benefits instead of improving city education.

### **Urban Business Community**

An active local business community can be an important participant in city education politics. The differences in decentralization efforts in New York and in Chicago have been ascribed to the traditional activism of Chicago's businesses (Gittell 1994). Corporations in Minneapolis, Chicago, and San Francisco historically have been involved in education issues (Gittell 1980). The urban business community was engaged in local education policy in Baltimore, Detroit, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Surprisingly, findings indicate that education policy in Minneapolis did not receive much attention from the local business community. This was despite a tradition of business involvement in city politics. At the state level, however, the business community of Minnesota is highly involved in education, represented by the Minnesota Business Partnership, comprised of one hundred CEOs. While most of these corporations are in the city, the group primarily works with the governor on state-level policy.

In cities with an active business community, business involvement often did not go beyond providing funds for local reform efforts. They often supported local foundations that assisted local reform efforts. This was more apparent in cities with Annenberg Challenge Grant funding which required matching funds from businesses. Local businesses rarely engaged in political battles over city education policy during the period of this study. The exception was in Baltimore where the business community supported contracting out the administration of the system to Education Alternatives Inc. and was later very involved in the state takeover. Clarence Stone, as part of his eleven-city study of education reform, found very little evidence of business involvement in education reform (1988). This was because businesses chose to engage in broad debates around education rather than in the time-consuming efforts involved with implementation (Stone 1998).

The Chicago business community is active on education issues within the city, and they are also powerful at the state-level. Chicago business groups were very involved in the 1988 reform, continued to press Springfield for deeper changes in the Chicago school system, and vigorously supported the 1995 reform. In 1988, Chicago United (CU), a long-standing,

influential organization of Chicago businessmen, worked directly with local neighborhood and activist groups, hired an organizer to lead the reform efforts at the state capitol and provided financial support. Their political sophistication and strong ties to political leaders supported the efforts of the activist groups in the state capitol (Gittell 1994). Our research revealed, however, that some lamented the absence of business and its resources for school reform, especially in the area of coalition organizing.

## **The Greater Baltimore Committee**

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) represents approximately 700 companies from the greater Baltimore area and was organized in 1955. In 1994, three of the twenty-nine directors of the GBC board were African American (Orr 1996, 328). Corporate leadership is organized by the GBC towards improving Baltimore as a community in which to live, work, and conduct business. In 1995, GBC Vice President complained that Baltimore had changed. She said, "Baltimore used to be a real hometown. Where the heads of the businesses grew up in Baltimore, that is now no longer the case. It is now hard to get business involved in the community" (Interview 1995). The general goal of the GBC is one of economic development, including the development of well-educated citizens and workers.

The GBC, according to Marion Orr, became involved in education in the 1980s (Orr 1996). The GBC has several education programs including the Adopt-A-School Program, the Baltimore Commonwealth, the School/Business Partnership Program, the College Bound Foundation, School-to-Work Academies, and the Academy for Educational Leadership. GBC sponsors training sessions with new school principals in Baltimore City including a three-day training period and follow-up every six weeks. They also have developed specific computer accounting software for school principals (Interview 1995). Orr found this training program "is designed to prepare principals for the procurement, budgeting, and other management responsibilities expected of them under school-based management" (Orr 1996, 328). The GBC has had some disagreements with Mayor Schموke. The GBC supported the takeover of Baltimore schools and the subsequent contract with the private manager Education Alternatives Inc. (EAI). Orr states, "GBC has long advocated implementing private management techniques in the operation of BCPS" (Orr 1996, 334). Mayor Schموke originally supported the takeover and contract but dismissed EAI in December of 1995. The mayor was also opposed to the reconstitution plan of 1996 until he got more control over the board and more money for the school district (Orr 1996). In short, GBC, BUILD, and the mayor have a love/hate triangle with alliances and disagreements over education issues, each allied with another against the third, at one time.

### **City Absence in the State Education Regime**

City interests have little influence over education politics at the state level. This was clearly stated by a diverse group of interviewees. The reasons for the omission of city school interests from state education regimes are numerous.

Racism and anti-city resentment were cited by interviewees as a reason for the lack of response by the state to city school needs. They felt city stakeholders were marginalized because of historical tensions between the city and the rest of the state. Racism among leaders at the state level and their constituents was often brought up by our interviewees to explain anti-city school policies.

Anti-city sentiments are tied to racism as cities have a concentration of minority populations. The school population usually has an even larger number of minority students. By 1990, African Americans and Latinos comprised 36% of the U.S. urban population and only 14% of the U.S. suburban population. These numbers are even more extreme in certain states such as New Jersey where city populations are 63% minority while suburbs are only 15% minority. These figures are presented in the table found in the first chapter of this report. (See Table One.)

#### **Philadelphia**

Philadelphia's interests have not been strongly represented at the state level. At the time of our research, Pennsylvania state politics did not produce any major proposals for additional funding or reform programs aimed at specifically helping urban areas. Advocacy groups and political leaders in Philadelphia believed it pointless to expect any programs to arise in Harrisburg. They gave several reasons: First, there was a Republican governor and both houses of the legislature were Republican. Second, representation of urban areas has dropped in the legislature. Moreover, there are no prominent minority players in the state legislature. Finally, Pennsylvania has a very conservative political culture. Many of our interviewees paraphrased the oft-quoted James Carville: Pennsylvania is Philadelphia on one side, Pittsburgh on the other, and Alabama in the middle. One interviewee said, "In Pennsylvania, it's Philadelphia against the rest of the state. It's ugly. Not very well hidden. It's racist and bipartisanly racist" (Interview 1996). Another interviewee said:

There is a long standing rift between Philadelphia and the rest of the state. A lot of representatives get elected to combat Philadelphia. Long history goes back to the days when Philadelphia controlled the legislature. The rest of the state resented that. We're still living with that residual (Interview 1997).

In *A Prayer for the City*, Buzz Bissinger found that racism was pervasive in the state capital. He wrote: "The state capital of Harrisburg was a miserable place, not only because the town was an ugly and crummy backwater but also because of the absolutely corrosive attitude that most legislators bore toward the city. Cohen himself saw it when a legislator whom he had never met before expressed his admiration for the mayor this way: 'He's done a helluva better job than the nigger you had in there before'" (Bissinger 1997, 312).

In sum, there is no common agreement about education goals within cities. There is, in other words, a lack of civic capacity around education (Stone 1998). Mayors, advocacy organizations, teachers' unions, superintendents, school boards, and the business community are important participants in city education, yet their influence does not reach the state capital. As explained above, there were not any strong coalitions within the city, a likely contributor to state-level weakness. Few formal coalitions around education existed in any of our cities, and there was little agreement about education goals. When city stakeholders were interviewed, they most often identified increased funding as the issue that most needed to be addressed by the state. Yet, they did not organize to change funding. Some city stakeholders felt that governance change was an important issue. Others felt that vouchers and charter schools were important. Overall, they did not seem to have a united message or plan of action for working at the state-level. Perhaps it would do them good to remember the old adage, "United we stand, divided we fall."

## **CONCLUSION: WHERE WE'VE BEEN AND WHERE WE CAN GO...**

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As a result of this nine-state study of state political regimes, we conclude that there has been a shift in power within the states. The old regime in state education policy was led by the teachers' unions, administrative associations, the state education departments, the state boards of education, and their local counter parts. The education professionals controlled much of the decision making in state education politics until the 1980s when a national shift to more conservative ideological politics and the election of conservative governors contributed to the creation of a new regime at the state level.

After studying charter school and school equity policies in our nine states, we found new participants involved in education decision-making. Elected officials, primarily governors and some legislators, are assuming new leadership roles. Many of these governors were elected on conservative platforms reflecting the suburbanization of America and its corresponding priorities. Resultant is that they had little interest in reforming urban schools; they were even less interested in building local advocacy and participation. The new regimes, as advanced by the conservative governors, included high-stakes testing, expansion of standards, vouchers, and charter schools.

There was (with exceptions) a dearth of local city advocacy groups in the state capitals. Resultant was a shocking absence of those who promoted the interests and priorities of city students and schools. Coalitions of city advocates were virtually non-existent. Informal stakeholders including the business community and religious leaders are also very active. Unions and professional organizations still have a great deal of power, but they are not longer considered the sole sources of expertise on school policies. Historically part of the urban agenda, state aid policies, financial equity, decentralization, and affirmative action, were not part of the new regime agendas.

### **Where do we go from here?**

What hope is there for a turn around which will once again lead us to an era of concern for the immigrant and minority populations, especially for those in urban schools who suffer the greatest harms from the American educational inequities? Three solutions are most often discussed. First, there is the need to regionalize and join the interests of cities and suburbs,

especially inner suburbs, so that the prejudices evident in state policies can be effectively challenged. Regional governments, some suggest, will result in more fair re-distributive funding policies, following active campaigns by coalitions of White, Latino and African American interests in common cause to influence state and national policies. We are not sanguine that such alliances are even possible, and there is little evidence supporting the possibility of such alliances. In fact, regional solutions are too often dominated by the professionals and suburban leaders, not city minority leaders. Many of these minority leaders only recently gained power, power that might be lost or minimized in regional coalitions.

Another solution is to expand the federal role in setting appropriate goals and protect the value of equity and impose additional requirements on the states. Strong national leadership is critical. Ideally, the president would champion this important role for the federal government. Unfortunately, recent pronouncements from Washington, from the newly elected President, and from the state houses and the activist conservative governors move in quite another direction. Devolution does not take place in a vacuum. If the federal government abandons its historical compensatory education role to the states, equity goals will be further damaged.

A third solution would encourage the building of stronger grass roots advocacy organizations, expanding community roles and encouraging communities to assert control over local schools, ultimately building sufficient power to change state leaders, regimes, and policies. All three solutions working in tandem could make a difference, but the chances of any of them happening are slim. Whoever said institutional change was easy!

There are too few states prepared to carry on the battle for equity and equality, too many political leaders responding to suburban interests, adverse to city populations and school needs. It is not surprising that the National Governors Association promotes devolution and increased state discretion in the use of federal funds. It is clear that such a policy will give state regimes, which have conflicting values and motivations, primacy. If these policies are adopted, local activism will be further marginalized and urban school reform will be relegated to privatization or the creation of alternative schools outside the system, taking the most active advocates out of the battle. As a result, the only recourse will be the courts. Indeed, we see that we are already moving in that direction. Among those few advocacy groups still working towards equity, many already focus only on the courts, not in forming coalitions or even building broad political support behind rulings.

In tandem with court cases, or itself as a point of advocacy, should be analysis and organization around the tax regimes in place in the states and their impact on school equity. After all, the structural inequality of our school systems is partially the result of numerous funding mechanisms, including property taxes. While there have been victories and failures in the courts, it is clear that neither an order of the court nor a legislative edict can be implemented without adequate monies. Fleeter (1996) identified six types of school property tax systems. That such a variation of structures is in place, ranging from no restrictions on increases to voter approved, to tax rate caps, affirms the need to broadly incorporate this into school equity movement strategies.

That school reform agendas are successful in the long term is, in part, dependent on whether they are comprehensive. Guaranteeing broader participation of a wider cross section of stakeholders in education confirms our commitment to improved governance and to the democratic political process. Parents and communities are clearly stakeholders whose increased involvement moves us toward ensuring that commitment. In short, school reform in America should be an ongoing and dynamic process, as is the democratic system itself.

## FINDINGS

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### ✓ **Governors**

In the 1980s, elected officials played a larger role in initiating education reform. Governors were increasingly active in education policy-making, but the legislators were in the forefront of this activism (Fuhrman 1990). Governors began moving beyond budgetary responsibilities to take on education quality issues (Kirst 1984), but their interests in education did not go beyond certain high-profile issues (Rosenthal 1990). Governors, over half of whom adopted austerity budgets in 1982, latched on to the call for educational reform as a way of bolstering their states failing economies. In an effort to attract new investors to their states, some governors used improved education as a selling point.

By the mid 1990s, governors played a more important role in setting the educational agendas in their states. Education was, without question, a key agenda item for each governor in our study; these governors either identified education as their “fundamental priority” or said that they wished to be known as the “Education Governor” in their 1997 State of the State addresses. Governors allied themselves with business organizations, religious groups, taxpayer organizations, and suburbanites; they tried to reduce the independence of state education bureaucracies; they challenged the authority of the unions; and governors superseded legislative leaders. Their educational goals gave priority to vouchers, charter schools, state takeovers, and standards. The agendas of these governors eschewed the issues of race and equity, and the need for city school reform.

All the governors in our study proposed major educational reforms between 1995-1997. Five of the nine governors supported voucher plans with the strongest support coming from governors Carlson and Ridge. Charter schools in various forms were initiated and supported by most governors. While some governors increased funding to state education programs and others were forced to address inequities because of court orders, no governor initiated equity reform or made city school issues a priority. On governance reforms, their programs were inconsistent. Some governors promoted local control and reduced state mandates, others increased state

control through takeovers of city schools and state-level accountability programs, and others were interested in both. Many governors put forward reforms that increased teacher certification requirements and limited collective bargaining rights.

### **Legislatures and Governors**

In Pennsylvania, the power struggle between the governor and the education committee chairs became open and hostile in 1996. Republican Governor Ridge introduced his charter school plan through a freshman representative without consulting the four chairs. The slighted majority chairs, most of whom were also Republicans, allied with the minority chairs to challenge the governor on his charter school proposal and his two voucher proposals. This conflict was so intense that the governor and Senator Rhodes, the chair of the Senate Education Committee, were not on speaking terms during this period. Many observers of Pennsylvania politics argued that this conflict undermined the governor's ability to implement his ambitious education program.

In most states, however, this transition to a gubernatorial-centered regime was smoother. Governors, rather than the chairs, proposed major education reforms and shepherded them through the legislative process. In addition, chairs were supportive of their governor's initiatives. While some analysts claim that governors exert only a "showy influence on selected issues" (Mazzoni 1994) while leaving most of the "steady work" to legislators, we found that governors and staff were doing more of the policy development which was traditionally the role of legislative committees. For example, Governor Whitman of New Jersey, rather than the legislature, put forward a detailed proposal for a system of state wide standards in 1997.

In addition, governors organized special committees composed of their appointees, often members of the business community, to study particular issues in education. These committees provided the governor with information and legitimacy to support his or her proposals. They also gave the governor independence from the education committees that had monopolized specialized information in the past. These committees or special commissions were organized by the governors around the issues of finance reform, standards, and property tax reform.

The trend toward gubernatorial leadership has benefited from recently enacted legislative term limits in twenty-one states. The California legislature, for example, has a two-term limit for its members. This diminishes the ability of committee chairs to build coalitions and establish a command of the policy area over a sustained period of time. In this context, governors with a focused agenda can now set priorities for the legislature.

In the nine states, the Republican party was increasingly powerful, especially among governors. A majority of the country's governors are now Republican, including seven of the nine governors in our study. State legislatures are becoming increasingly Republican in the south. In two of our southern states, traditional control by Democrats was weakening. The Texas Senate gained a Republican majority in 1997, and the Georgia Senate is likely to become Republican controlled. However, the Democratic party seems to be stronger in the northern legislatures. Democrats won back the senate in California and the house in Michigan in 1997. In 1998, Democrats won back the governorship in California, and the Reform party won the governorship in Minnesota. This party split could point to increased conflict between the legislature and the governor over education issues in the future.

### **State Superintendents and State Boards of Education**

School professionals have always had a large role in state education regimes. The state superintendent or the chief state school officer and the state board of education were identified in the past as the most influential decision-makers over education. In many states, these positions are appointed giving them greater independence from other elected officials. This self-contained bureaucracy has resisted and prevented reforms that they oppose.

In other states, governors have closer control over the state education bureaucracy. They appoint the state superintendent and members of the school board. We found that the governors increasingly dominated elected state superintendents and boards. In California and Georgia, the elected state superintendents deferred to the governors' education policies. In states where the governor appoints the education commissioner, several governors used their appointees to propose the most controversial aspects of their agenda. This was evident in New Jersey and in Pennsylvania. Governor Whitman's Commissioner of Education, Leo Klagholz, put forward her

school finance plan and charter school initiative, drawing criticism away from the governor. According to several interviewees, Governor Ridge chose his state commissioner of education from outside the education establishment to find someone supportive of vouchers and strong charter schools.

In several cases, governors added to their formal powers over education by limiting the power of the state education bureaucracy. In 1995, Governor Carlson of Minnesota abolished the state department of education and created a new agency, the Department of Children, Families, and Learning, which includes many of the functions of the former education department. The governor appoints its commissioner, and the new department directly reports to the governor.

Governor Miller also institutionalized additional power over education for the office of governor. Significant new education programs were established which were not under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. The HOPE scholarship program, the Pre-K initiative, and the Office of School Readiness are all under the direct control of the governor.

In 1998, Governor Engler of Michigan also transferred authority from the state board of education to his appointed superintendent. His school chief has responsibility over rule-making, teacher certification, and school accreditation. His executive decision was upheld by the state appeals court, but it is being challenged in the state supreme court.

#### ✓ **Informal Stakeholders**

Regime analysis attempts to map out informal and formal power relations among a diverse group of stakeholders both inside and outside government and to assess the impact of these arrangements on policy outcomes. It places special importance on the business elite which, "has no power of command over the community at large and can be defeated on any given issue", but also little of "an activist agenda that can be accomplished without its cooperation" (Stone 1989, 197). In the state education regime, the teachers' unions, the business community, and religious interest groups informally influence the decision-making process. These groups lobby elected officials, finance campaigns, organize voters, and propose their own reforms. Our research found that the business elite and religious organizations were increasing in importance.

- **Teachers' and Professional Unions**

The teachers' and professional unions have always been among the most powerful interest groups in state politics. They contribute the largest amount of PAC money to state legislative campaigns and are an effective lobbying force. Unions are major participants in education regimes at the state and local level. They effectively use state legislation to shape collective bargaining at the district level. During the 1970s, analysts claimed that policy makers were no longer "able to set policy unless the policy is consistent with the union objectives" (Grimshaw 1979, 150).

In the 1990s, these formidable members of state education regimes were still able to fend off perceived threats to their power such as vouchers. Most of the Republican governors in the study allied with business groups, the Catholic Church, and the Christian Right in support of a plan to provide students with public funds to attend schools of their choosing. Governors Carlson and Ridge were especially vigilant in their promotion of vouchers. Their attempts were unsuccessful in part because teachers' unions organized diverse coalitions to block them.

In June of 1998, union strength was demonstrated by their defeat of Proposition 226 in California. Governor Wilson sponsored this initiative which would have required annual, written permission from union members before a union could contribute their dues to political campaigns. He received support from members of the business community and taxpayer organizations. Although similar legislation was passed in Washington State in 1992, a large Democratic turnout for the gubernatorial primary benefited the union's cause, and it was defeated by 53% of the vote (1998). In November of 1988, its power was again felt when California Governor-elect Gray Davis included the teachers' union prominently in his new education task force.

Clearly union power within the education regime is still strong, but challenges to their control increased in the 1990s, and they compromised with governors on issues related to teacher tenure reforms, restrictions on collective bargaining, and increased assessment. New performance assessment policies and alternative teacher education laws were passed in Maryland, and tougher

tenure laws were enacted in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In April 1994, Governor Engler of Michigan and the legislature enacted a bill that took away some collective-bargaining rights and instituted fines for striking teachers. The 1995 Chicago school legislation sharply limited issues subject to collective bargaining, created an eighteen-month moratorium on teacher strikes, and partially limited teacher tenure.

Teachers' organizations increasing acceptance of charter school legislation, provided it maintains all the restrictions of their collective bargaining agreements and the number of schools are limited, suggests their recognition of the need to accept some reforms. Although most unions opposed the stronger charter laws of 1995-1997, they begrudgingly supported weaker charter laws, particularly in the face of voucher threats. They were also forced to accept some form of charter school legislation when proposals were strongly proposed and backed by the governor. Many of the conservative governors in our study openly attacked the unions on their opposition to charter school reform as they found no reason to be deferential to unions who did not support their election to office. Governor Engler in his 1996 State of the State address said,

Regrettably, there are special interests in our state that feel threatened by change. They don't want better teachers to be better paid. They don't want parents to have the freedom to choose their schools. They don't want a report card on their performance. They don't want a charter school competing with them. They just don't want change. They are defenders of the status quo -- which is Latin for how messed up things are! But I've got a message for those of you who stand in the way: It's time you get out of the way! (1996)

Unions fought governors on the issue of charters in Texas, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, California, Minnesota, and Michigan. A representative of the Texas Federation of Teachers (AFT) characterized this battle as “the beginning of the thirty years war.”

- **Business**

In most of the states, business created organizations devoted to lobbying the state legislature for certain types of school reform or formed coalitions with other stakeholders in education. These groups include the Texas Business Education Coalition, the Minnesota Business Partnership,

TechNet in California, the Business Education Partnership in Pennsylvania, and the Maryland Business Roundtable.

In many states, business groups allied with the governors to support reforms. In Minnesota, the Minnesota Business Partnership supported Governor Perpich's post-secondary option and public school choice measures that preceded their landmark charter school legislation. This coalition was able to prevail over the objections of the teachers' unions. In Illinois, the 1988 Chicago school reform was backed by a powerful coalition that included the governor, the mayor of Chicago, community based organizations and business groups (Gittell 1994).

In Maryland, there is a strong relationship between the private sector and the governor. During his election campaign, the governor of Maryland opposed performance-based assessment and alternative teacher education that conflicted with interests of the unions who had been supporters of his campaign. Six months after his election, he changed his position to support these assessment changes because of pressure from the private sector and local communities.

In New Jersey, business interests were increasingly involved with Governor Whitman on education policy issues. Whitman met with IBM representatives who stated their desire to become more involved in charter schools and privatization. Charter schools were supported in New Jersey by the Prudential Foundation, AT&T, and the Dodge Foundation.

Though we determined that business interest in education was increasing and that they usually allied with the Republican governors on vouchers, charter schools, and universal standards, it is very difficult to make generalizations about their roles in different cities and states. The business community is not monolithic. In general, it seems that smaller and industrial business organizations including manufacturer associations and chambers of commerce seemed more likely to support Republican officials and "market-based" education reforms. Larger businesses appeared more likely to work in coalitions with education professionals and were less likely to support vouchers and privatization plans. In addition, one interviewee said that younger CEOs were less interested in broad-based education reform since they planned to use labor in other countries while the older CEOs felt more a part of the community.

- **Christian and Catholic Interest Groups**

Our research disclosed that religious groups played an important informal role in state education policy. In many states, the Catholic Church was an important supporter of vouchers. Christian groups were interested in curriculum reforms, decentralization, and vouchers. Christian-based interest groups were especially active in Texas, Georgia, and Pennsylvania. In Georgia and Texas, they controlled key positions in the education bureaucracy. Linda Shrenko, Georgia's elected state superintendent, championed the interest of Christian groups. In Texas, at least five of the fifteen members of the elected state school board of education are affiliated with the Christian Right.

Because of their growing numbers, activist Christian groups have been influential in shifting many state governors to more conservative education policies. A representative of the AFT in Texas said of Governor Bush, "he has had to deliver to both sides of his party, the country club Republicans and the religious right. In his heart of hearts, I don't think he has much use for the Religious Right, but you can't maintain power in this state without them" (Interview 1996). The religious right has grown more rapidly in Texas than anywhere else in the country. Between 1991 and 1994, more than one hundred chapters of the Christian Coalition were formed (Beinart 1998). Ex-governor of Texas Ann Richards' daughter Cecile is the director of a newly formed watchdog group of the Christian Right, Texas Freedom Network.

The role of the Catholic Church in the education politics is far more difficult to assess. Their influence tends to be manifested in a subtler manner. One interviewee spoke of the Bishop from Philadelphia quietly walking throughout the state legislature and speaking to key members of the legislature. The church was supportive of the two voucher proposals in this state, but they tend to work behind-the-scenes. Many interviewees mentioned that the Catholic Church was very involved with promoting vouchers, especially in Philadelphia and in Texas. In Texas, the Catholic Church has the largest percentage of private schools in the state, and many of them are in financial trouble.

According to one interviewee, “They are taking a beating. There are no more nuns. Science education and special education cost them a lot of money. Vouchers look like a way out for them. The Catholic Church is not loud but they are bankrolling this deal. They are the big money players. They have a dominant number of kids in private schools” (Interview 1997).



## AFTERWARD

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As the new and active participants in state education policy-making have emerged, attention has shifted away from the needs of city school systems and city populations. Suburban interests dominate the state agendas on education, and the effect has been to marginalize the education needs of people of color, new immigrants, and the poor in the cities. School reform in the cities now takes a back burner to the new ideologies governing state politics. There is a general lack of city opposition coalitions to counter the new state policies that ignore their interests and concerns. The former activists in the civil rights communities and in the unions have not been active in the cause of city school reform.

As we go to press, we learn about the new statistics resultant from the 2000 census. The numbers indicate that segregation in some places has increased. Gary Orfield of Harvard University stated “The trends in the 2000 census should be taken as a warning that our historic problem of black exclusion is taking on new and complex dimensions” (Schmitt 2001, n.p.). Census data indicates that all but one of the most segregated cities are in our study states. The Associated Press, on April 3, 2001, listed America’s most segregated cities. For “Black – White” segregation they cited Detroit, Milwaukee, New York, Chicago, and Newark, NJ. “Hispanic – White” segregation was most extreme in New York, Newark, NJ, Los Angeles/Long Beach, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

The Lewis Mumford Center at the State University of New York recently produced an analysis of the 2000 census figures, *Ethnic Diversity Grows, Neighborhood Integration Is at a Standstill*. They concluded:

[T]he average white person in metropolitan America lives in a neighborhood that is almost 83% white and only 7% black. In contrast, a typical black individual lives in a neighborhood that is only 33% white and as much as 54% black.

Diversity is experienced very differently in the daily lives of whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians... Residential segregation, particularly among blacks and whites, remains high in cities and suburbs around the country . . .

Neighborhood integration has remained a goal of public policy and popular opinion because it is seen as proof of the American ideal of equal opportunity.

But in fact, the growth of minority populations and the absence of improvement in

segregated living patterns has meant that Hispanics and Asians now live in more isolated settings than they did in 1990, with a smaller proportion of white residents in their neighborhoods.

Clearly the new numbers, reflective of our increased national diversity and continued segregation, will fuel many changes including new legislation to address the new numbers at the various levels of our federal system, new policy proposals from the private sector, and new truths and allegations about race and racism in the United States. These new numbers present opportunities for both formal and informal stakeholders to positively impact public education. However given the marginalization that has resulted from suburban driven education at the state level, whether it is an opportunity that is seized or squandered remains to be seen.

## APPENDIX A

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### Governors, Party, and Education Agendas

Governor	Party	Education Proposals
<b>CA Wilson</b>	R	<p>Proposed vouchers in 1996 and 1997.</p> <p>Strongly supported charter schools.</p> <p>Proposed nearly \$2 billion in new state funds in a range of education proposals. The bulk of the new money went into a very popular class size reduction program which provides monetary incentives to districts which can meet certain class size reduction goals. This is considerably easier for rural and (older) suburban districts that do not have the overcrowding and general facility problems that face urban schools.</p> <p>Proposed changes in statewide teacher certification.</p> <p>Recognized as a “leader” in barring illegal immigrant children from attending public schools.</p>
<b>GA Miller</b>	D	<p>Against vouchers.</p> <p>Supported decreasing restrictions and regulations and increasing funding for charter schools.</p> <p>Prioritized education in every budget since his election. In the past two years, the budget for education has gone up from 50% of the total budget to 54% of the total budget. In addition, \$2 billion has been raised by the lottery that of his programs directly under his control, instead of the department of education. He has succeeded in making additional institutional changes that strengthen the governor and weaken the state superintendent.</p> <p>Proposed national teacher certification even if it means keeping them an extra week in the summer.</p> <p>Proposed a 6% raise for teachers.</p> <p>Proposed and implemented teacher raises, lottery subsidized education, free pre-K, and the HOPE scholarship which provides free tuition for all students who graduate high school with a B average or better.</p>
<b>IL Edgar</b>	R	<p>Against vouchers.</p> <p>Strongly supported charter schools.</p> <p>Proposed a school equity finance reform which would hold all districts harmless and combined an increase in state income tax, property tax relief, and modest increases in overall spending on education through an increase in the foundation formula. This program was a response to demands from Chicago’s inner-suburbs.</p> <p>Played a major role in Chicago’s school governance reforms. The 1995 Chicago school budget reform placed the control of the budget of the Chicago Public Schools directly in the hands of the mayor.</p>

<b>Governor</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Education Proposals</b>
<b>MD Glendening</b>	D	<p>Against vouchers.</p> <p>Demonstrated little support for charter schools.</p> <p>Played a major role in the state takeover of Baltimore schools.</p> <p>Proposed additional dollars for school construction and the Maryland Hope Scholarship Program in his 1997 State of the State address. He included additional dollars to support the expansion of high school assessment and to support school construction and established the Career Connections Initiative, a school-to-work program. He has increased technology in schools.</p>
<b>MI Engler</b>	R	<p>Suggested vouchers but agreed to charters.</p> <p>Primary supporter of Michigan's very strong charter law and has supported the expansion of charter schools.</p> <p>Led the fundamental change of refinancing the state school system and abolished property taxes in Michigan.</p> <p>Proposed the School District Accountability Act. In Jan. 1997 which would allow the state to takeover the administration of a school district if more than 80% of its students failed proficiency tests or if its dropout rate exceeded 25%.</p> <p>Supported restrictions on collective-bargaining rights and instituted fines for striking teachers in April 1994.</p>
<b>MN Carlson</b>	R	<p>Zealous advocate of vouchers for low-income students in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Option to attend non-public schools.</p> <p>Strongly supported charter and choice laws.</p> <p>Planned to lift state mandates on public schools, but has not yet detailed his plan.</p> <p>Planned to loosen teacher-tenure laws.</p> <p>Proposed additional funds for technology, tax-free college savings accounts, and summer jobs for at-risk youths.</p>
<b>NJ Whitman</b>	R	<p>Proposed vouchers at the beginning of her administration, but backed down to avoid the controversy.</p> <p>Pushed for charter school legislation that went into effect Jan. 1996. Her plan had strong union support.</p> <p>Placed herself in the center of finding a solution to the court-mandated finance formula revision linking fiscal spending and budget appropriations to a set of core curriculum standards for every student in every New Jersey public school.</p> <p>Supported state takeovers of Patterson, Jersey City, and Newark.</p> <p>Proposed core curriculum standards.</p>

Governor	Party	Education Proposals
<b>PA Ridge</b>	Rep	<p>Put forward two voucher proposals in 1994 and 1995 which could be applied to private, religious, or out-of-district schools for all children of families who make less than \$70,000.</p> <p>Proposed two strong charter school laws.</p> <p>Has publicly stated that additional funds won't improve education.</p> <p>Strong proponent of local decision-making.</p> <p>Proposed and implemented teacher tenure, re-certification, and sabbatical reform.</p> <p>Increased funding for technology in schools and set up an advisory commission on standards.</p>
<b>TX Bush</b>	Rep	<p>Attempted to get vouchers passed in 1995; later supported a pilot program.</p> <p>Supported charter schools and their expansion.</p> <p>Proposed a Property Tax Cut Act of 1997 that would lower property taxes by \$2.8 billion a year and increase the state sales and motor vehicle tax, and start a business activity tax. His plan would abolish the corporate franchise tax and the school property tax on business inventory and place a 1-1/4% levy on all forms of business that brought in more than \$500,000 after certain expenses and capital investments are subtracted.</p> <p>Called for downsizing the state agency and giving more decision-making to local districts.</p> <p>Has stated that his fundamental priority is the "education of our children".</p> <p>Supported increased accountability.</p>

## APPENDIX B

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### Type and Number of Formal Interviews in Nine States

Local Advocacy Groups	49	Attorneys	2
State-wide Advocacy Groups	31	Academics	4
State Agencies *	14	Consultants	3
Local School Administrators	14	Independent Activists	1
State Legislature	21	Lobbyists	1
Mayors and City Councils	6	Foundations	2
Teachers' Unions	18	Journalists	2
Administrative Associations	12	Religious Organizations	3
Business Groups	16	<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>

\* Includes Governor's Office

### Number of Formal Interviews in Each State

California	15
Georgia	23
Illinois	21
Maryland	22
Michigan	14
Minnesota	36
New Jersey	19
Pennsylvania	25
Texas	24

## APPENDIX C

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### Interview Instrument

#### Open-ended questions

1. Interest Groups - i.e., Business Community, Religious Groups, Advocacy Groups (we have most of the groups already identified, but should confirm with interviewee if there are any other groups that we don't know about.)

- A. Did they support charters/finances? Why?
- B. Were they uniformly behind it or were some groups more into than others?
- C. How did they support it? How strong was their support? Provide lobbying? Dollars? Set up meetings? Rallies? Mailings? Advertising? Testimony at hearings or court cases?
- D. Did they have suggestions of their own or did they just go along with what the governor or others had to say?
- E. Did they have any open confrontations with other groups about it? Who won?
- F. Has their position changed over time? Why?

#### 2. Legislature

- A. Which members of the legislature have been strongest on charters/finance? Which members of the legislature proposed the legislation? What area of the state are they from? Why have they been behind it? What part of their constituency would benefit? What position do they hold within the legislature (what committee are they on/ chair or not)
- B. Whom did they conflict with over this issue?
- C. How was the legislation changed over time? Who was most influential in altering it?
- D. What outside groups had the most influence within the legislature? When talking to legislative aides, find out who came to lobby or give testimony during hearings.

### 3. Governor

- A. What has been the Governor's stance on charter schools and finance?
- B. Did he/she propose any legislation on these topics?
- C. Did his/her position change over time?
- D. Did he/she put together special committee to look at this topic?
- E. How did they influence the legislature on this issue? How did they push the issue within the public?

### 4. Education Bureaucracy

- A. What has been their stance on charter schools and finance?
- B. Did they propose any legislation on these topics?
- C. Did their position change over time?
- D. Have they conflicted with other groups about charters/finance?

### 5. General Questions

- A. Is there any concerted effort to improve education in urban areas through these proposals? Who would you say benefits most?
- B. Who else should I speak to learn more about this topic?

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