

Response to Misleading Reports Concerning Senator Obama's Position on Vouchers

There have been misleading reports that Senator Obama voiced support for voucher programs in an interview with the editorial board of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Senator Obama has always been a critic of vouchers, and expressed his longstanding skepticism in that interview. Throughout his career, he has voted against voucher proposals and voiced concern for siphoning off resources from our public schools. The misleading reports that have been circulated about Senator Obama's position took excerpts of an interview out of context.

A rough transcript of the interview and a link to the video are included below. The video and transcript make clear that Senator Obama: (1) repeated his longstanding opposition to vouchers; (2) expressed incredulity that the Milwaukee voucher program has never been studied to see if it works (in light of the argument of voucher proponents that we should experiment with vouchers to study their effects); and (3) re-stated his view that, to date, there is no evidence that these programs are in the best interest of our kids. He then laid out his own ideas on reforming our schools.

These misleading reports are particularly disturbing given that Senator Obama has laid out the most comprehensive education agenda of any candidate in this race – an agenda that does not include vouchers, in any shape or form. Obama's Pre-K to 12 agenda offers preparation that begins at birth and continues with world-class schools, outstanding teachers, and transformative principals:

- The first part of his plan focuses on providing quality, affordable early childhood education to every American child. As President, Obama will launch a Children's First Agenda that provides care, learning and support to families with children ages zero to five. He'll create Early Learning Grants to help states create a system of high-quality early care and education for all young children and their families. He'll increase Head Start funding and quadruple Early Start to include a quarter of a million at-risk children. And Obama will create a Presidential Early Learning Council to coordinate this effort across all levels of government and ensure that we're providing these children and families with the highest quality programs.
- The second part of his education plan is to recruit, support, and reward teachers and principals to ensure that every school in America is filled with outstanding educators. That starts with recruiting a new generation of teachers and principals to replace the generation that's retiring and to keep up with the record number of students entering our schools. He'll create a new Service Scholarship program to recruit top talent into the profession. And he will make this pledge as President – if you commit your life to teaching, America will commit to paying for your college education.
- To prepare our new teachers, Barack Obama will require that all schools of education are accredited, and he will evaluate their outcomes so that we know which ones are doing the best job at preparing the best teachers. He'll also create a voluntary national performance assessment so we can be sure that every new educator is trained and ready to walk into the classroom and start teaching effectively. To support our

teachers, Obama's plan will expand mentoring programs that pair experienced, successful teachers with new recruits. And to reward our teachers, Barack Obama will follow the lead of cities like Denver that have found new and innovative ways to increase teacher pay that are developed with teachers, not imposed on them.

- The Obama plan would provide resources to try these innovative programs in school districts all across America. Districts will be able to design programs that reward accomplished educators who serve as a mentor to new teachers with the salary increase they deserve. They can reward those who teach in underserved places rural and urban communities across the country. And if teachers consistently excel in the classroom, that work can be valued and rewarded as well.
- The third part of his plan is to work with our nation's governors and educators to create and use assessments that can improve achievement in school districts all across America by including the kinds of research, scientific investigation, and problem-solving that our children will need to compete in a 21st century knowledge economy. Finally, Obama understands that government alone cannot solve the problems in our education system and that parents have to meet their own responsibilities and get involved in their children's education.
- Obama believes our commitment to education has to be real and not just rhetorical. He often says the problem with No Child Left Behind is that George Bush left the money behind. As President, Obama will reform No Child Left Behind so that it is funded, offers a broader range of assessments, and has an accountability system that is focused on improving schools.