

November 12, 2009

Dear Committee Members:

I am appalled that you are seeking ways to "improve the states' private school tuition tax credit law." You should repeal it immediately. Instead of allowing rich people to exchange tuition money for each other's kids you should be requiring that the tax money be used to help the 90.2% of the students who are attending the regular public schools. You should be in a special session instead of sitting here worrying about tax breaks for the rich.

Let me tell you a story. I live in Paradise Valley. I have a neighbor who lives in probably a 5 million dollar house with her husband and two daughters. I asked her one day how her girls were doing and she said, "You won't believe it. We used to pay \$8,000 a year for each of them to go to their school. They changed it to a charter and now we don't pay anything and I get 29 cents a mile to take them to school.

I am the founder and President of a non-profit corporation which funds after school programs in economically deprived areas, mainly in west and south Phoenix. Those schools, like all public schools, are in dire need and nobody is doing anything about it. We are more than 4 months into the year and the state doesn't have a budget. Teachers are facing bigger and bigger classes. Many of them buy their own supplies and yet they face an uncertain future. They may be laid off. Children sit in their seats and worry that Joe Arpaio may pick up their Dad and they won't have any money and they probably will have to go to Mexico even though they are American born and have never been there.

What in the world are you thinking about. Thirty percent of our students are dropping out of high school and you are sitting here dreaming up ways to keep from paying for their education. That is unconscionable. A democracy can only succeed if it has an educated populace and yet we are not concerned that almost one in three young people will be out on the streets without a high school education. How many will end up in jail? How many can Jack-in-the-box hire? And what about the job market? Who will repair our cars, our air conditioners, etc.? What potential doctors, nurses, engineers and lawyers are roaming the streets? How many will exist on government programs or become homeless?

It is time to tell Jeff Flake that he and his friends are going to have to pay for their own kids' tuition. You have more important problems to solve.

Sincerely,

Michael Norman