NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Court strikes down Louisiana Gov. Jindal's school choice program

Tom Gallagher | May. 8, 2013 NCR Today

In another round of the bitterly contested fight over school financing -- which pits government school advocates, teachers unions and administrators against education reform or "school choice" advocates who promote vouchers as a way for parents and families to choose a school best suited for their families -- the Louisiana Supreme Court struck down Gov. Bobby Jindal's school choice program 6-1.

The court's rationale, reported by The Huffington Post [1], is unsurprising:

> Louisiana's Supreme Court issued a 6-1 decision on Tuesday that struck down Gov. Bobby Jindal's (R) plan to power a private school voucher program with state funds, the AP reports.
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> With Justice Greg Guidry dissenting, the majority ruled in favor of the Louisiana Association of Educators, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers and the Louisiana School Boards Association. Justice John Weimer wrote "the clear, specific and unambiguous language of the constitution" does not allow the state government to divert state funds earmarked for public schools in the state's Minimum Foundation Program to pay for private or parochial tuition, according to the Times-Picayne, which added that the court did not consider the program on its merits.
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> Roughly 8,000 students have been approved to receive vouchers in the coming academic year, the AP reports.
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> Jindal responded to the ruling in a press statement (via WAFB), saying, "We're disappointed the funding mechanism was rejected, but we are committed to making sure this program continues and we will fund it through the budget. The bottom line is that our kids only get one chance to grow up and we are committed to making sure choice is alive and families can send their children to the school of their choice.

Meanwhile, Catholic elementary and secondary schools continue their downward spiral. Just take a look at the numbers below.

The Steady Decline of Catholic Schools in U.S.

	1975	**2012**
Catholic elementary schools	8,414	5,636*
Students in Catholic elementary schools	2.6m	1.4m*

Catholic secondary schools	1,624	1,205*
Students in Catholic secondary schools	884,181	590,883*

Source: CARA (*estimates from NCEA)

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Links:
[1] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/07/bobby-jindal-school-vouchers_n_3231136.html