



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF NEW JERSEY

Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee  
January 20, 2011  
S.1872 Opportunity Scholarship Act

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey is opposed to the use of public funds to support students attending non-public schools.

Our comments before this committee relate to S.1872's fiscal impact. It is unsettling that the true costs have not been more transparent as the bill has been in constant flux. In fact, the costs have been a moving target with changes to the number and value of the vouchers. This makes it difficult to know the state's fiscal commitment.

New Jersey cannot afford this program regardless of the cost. Every one seems to agree that the State is broke. Income from our major tax sources has not rebounded from the recession and there is insufficient support for any new taxes to provide additional revenue. Even without additional spending New Jersey will face another austere budget. If the number of vouchers authorized in this bill are awarded, S.1872 will lead to a loss of revenue to the State treasury over the five years of the pilot of between 500 and 800 million dollars of corporate business tax income. That means additional cuts in FY 2012 and future budgets; cuts that are likely to impact services from health care to transportation to safety net programs for those living in poverty.

It is unlikely that the number of students who qualify and apply for the vouchers will substantially reduce costs in a district. Additionally, any "savings" from children moving from public to private schools are constitutionally dedicated to property tax relief and are not available for other budgetary needs.

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey urges you to not release this bill from committee.