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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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CHARTER LAW SCORECARD RANKS STATES *5th Annual analysis finds new trends, weakened laws*

(Washington, DC 11/9/01) The Center for Education Reform (CER) has released its 5th annual ranking scorecard and legislative profiles of the nation's 38 charter school laws, with changes in the rankings of 29 laws resulting from either improvements or, legislative restrictions on the laws.

Only 20 states have laws that can be considered strong. Laws falling into the "strong" category (As & Bs) are states that foster the development of numerous and genuinely independent charter schools. Weaker laws only provide infertile ground for advancing charter schools growth.

The number of states scoring an "A" are down from nine last year to seven this year. Texas and California are the most significant states to be bumped down a grade. The Texas law now vests more control in school districts and gives total authority to regulate charters to the Commissioner, and requires additional non-results driven, oversight. California made only a slight change in its law, curbing funding on non-classroom based charters, but the reality of school board obstacles contributed to its three-place drop in the rankings.

Oklahoma and South Carolina lost points for factors that discourage charter schools from applying and legal autonomy once they are open. However, Colorado, New Mexico and Ohio all gained significant ground from a year's worth of positive growth and improvements in their laws.

In addition to the state rankings and individual state profiles, *Charter School Laws Across the States* looks at new trends noting the emergence of virtual or cyber charter schools and the alarming move at rollback attempts, even in states with strong laws.

“One of the biggest challenges this year in scoring a state’s law is rating how it works in practice. Policymakers need to be aware; while their law may appear strong, if it is not clear about who is in charge, sets up obstacles to approval or allows unnecessary interference by school districts, numerous impediments will develop, discouraging applicants and the healthy development of existing schools,” said CER president Jeanne Allen.

CER’s rankings are determined by weighing each of ten major components that contribute to charter school development. After evaluation of each of the ten, grades are assigned on an A-F scale. Arizona again received the strongest grade while Mississippi’s law received the only “F.”

“This state-by-state analysis provides guidance to the states which do not yet have charter laws or are seeking to repair ineffective laws,” concluded Allen. “Charter schools are about accountability, choice and innovation. But it takes a good law to ensure all of those elements occur.”

Charter School Laws Across the States is available on-line or for \$23.95 (S&H included) by calling the Center at (800) 521-2118.

Individual state profiles will be available on the website soon. You may call and request specific profiles.

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The Center for Education Reform is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization providing support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools. For further information, please call (202) 822-9000 or visit our website at <http://edreform.com>.