

# THE Center for Education Reform



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## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **CER RANKS THE CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS** *Decade of Experience Marks Strong/Weak Laws*

(Washington, DC 4/30/01) A new ranking of the nation's 38 charter laws just released by The Center for Education Reform provides important information about what makes up a strong charter school law. After ten years of experience, those states with multiple chartering authorities and few limits on the number of schools permitted have generated the greatest number of charter schools. The announcement comes at the beginning of National Charter Schools Week, being celebrated April 30-May 4.

"After studying the first decade of charter school development, we are now able to see that some laws look better in theory than they are in practice," said CER president Jeanne Allen. "Provisions like those providing for multiple chartering authorities form the cornerstone of a strong charter school law. And a strong charter law is the single most important factor in creating strong charter schools."

In the 2000-2001 school year, 57 percent of operating charter schools were approved by entities other than a local school board. States with multiple sponsoring authorities or strong appeals process are home to 80.8 percent of the nation's charter schools, but those requiring the approval of the local school board have an average of 9.6 charters per state.

The rankings are determined by considering each of ten major components that contribute to charter school development. After evaluation of each of the components, totals are established and grades are assigned on the traditional A-F scale. Arizona again has received the strongest grade while Mississippi received the only F.

New to the ranking this year is Indiana that has caused a shift in the top 10 laws. Indiana's law has been ranked the 7<sup>th</sup> strongest, bumping even Texas and California despite their multiple chartering authorities and unlimited schools. The added weight to those criteria accounts for Delaware's move from its 2000 ranking of 5<sup>th</sup> strongest to second strongest this year.

Laws earning the higher marks, the As and Bs, are likely to continue fostering strong charter schools that offer parents alternatives, innovation and accountability, while states rating a C or below have little or no growth and any real innovation is stifled under numerous restrictions in the laws.

"CER's ranking of charter school laws provide the remaining 13 states with no charter school law, or those activists in states with a poor grade working on improving their law, a guide and a clear model of the components essential to a strong charter school law," remarked Allen. "For any state to accept anything less than a strong bill would be a tragedy for the children in that state."

Currently there are at least ten other amendments to charter laws still pending that could affect the state rankings before the 2001 state legislatures adjourn for the year. Other states are considering changes to their laws before the end of session. With the potential changes coming from those actions, CER will release the full updated book entitled *Charter School Laws Across the States: Ranking Score Card and Legislative Profiles* by the end of May.

CER's 2001 ranking of the nation's 38 charter school laws is available on-line on at:

<http://www.edreform.com>

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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>. For other National Charter Schools Week activities, go to: [http://www.edreform.com/charter\\_schools/visit/2001/index.html](http://www.edreform.com/charter_schools/visit/2001/index.html)*