



Back-to-School Alert

1st in a series from CER

CER RELEASES OFFICIAL CHARTER SCHOOL NUMBERS FOR 1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR *1,684 scheduled to open*

(8/30/99) As the kids go back-to-school nationwide, an unprecedented number of them will be attending charter schools. According to the Center for Education Reform's official numbers, 1,684 charter schools will open their doors to approximately 350,000 children in 32 states and the District of Columbia. Another four states have laws but will not have any charter schools this year (Arkansas, New Hampshire, Virginia and Wyoming).

"Since the first charter school opened its doors in 1992, public school systems have begun to respond and more children are getting the education they deserve," said CER president Jeanne Allen. "Our research proves that charter schools can and will set the example for the future of public education. Charter schools have created not just a ripple but a tidal wave on the educational scene," Allen added.

State laws in 36 states and the District — many of which CER helped establish — provide the opportunity to parents, teachers, civic and community leaders to establish schools that meet the needs of families whose children don't fit a "one size fits all" system.

Charter schools now involve millions of Americans. Involvement in charter schools includes not only the families attending them, but the school staffs, the policymakers involved, the private resource centers and civic groups aiding charter schools and the research teams, authorizers and associations whose jobs involve charter school oversight and support.

Although charter schools are widely embraced by the general public, the majority of traditional education groups still fight to limit their scope and independence. In fact, at the National Education Association's summer meeting, even First Lady Hillary Clinton got a chilly reception to her vocal support for charter schools. It was the only policy line she used during the speech that *didn't* get wild applause from the NEA delegates.

The sharp rise in charter schools is a result in large part of strong law states. The Center for Education Reform officially ranks state charter laws on a continuum from weak to strong using 10 widely respected criteria. This analysis of charter laws, the four-part Charter School Progress Report series and other supporting information is available by contacting the Center or via www.edreform.com.



In other news, school choice supporters are relieved by Ohio Judge Solomon Oliver's decision to finally allow Cleveland's choice children to return to their schools, but not satisfied that new children are excluded. In protest of Oliver's legislating from the bench, choice activists are holding candlelight vigils in cities nationwide tomorrow, August 31st at 8 pm. For more information, contact the Center.