

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 680#

### DONALD TRUMP'S PRESIDENCY WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Supporters of public education, particularly those in Education Administrations themselves, have often been hamstrung by political proprieties and legal constraints. This means that private providers and religious lobbyists have more freedom for direct politicking.

Consider recent experiences of members of the Education Department in the recent United States election.

In speeches and appearances, Republic President in waiting, Trump called for more choice, ending Common Core (centralised curriculum) and gutting of the Education Department.

Trump's most substantial campaign proposal on education was a \$20 billion grant program that he'd use to encourage states to expand school choice — giving parents more control over the kind of education their children receive — including through vouchers, charter schools and magnet schools. The money would come from somewhere else in the federal budget, but it's not clear where; Trump has not said.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/11/10/what-a-trump-presidency-me>

In particular, Donald Trump said repeatedly during his campaign that he wanted to gut the Department of Education. He said, [Back in August](#)

*“We want to bring education local so we're going to be cutting the Department of Education big league because we're running our education from Washington DC, which is ridiculous, instead of running it out of Miami or running it out of the different place that we have so many people.”*

What did the Department of Education think about that? An internal memo released to Gizmodo 10 November shows that the federal agency cautioned its employees not to say anything controversial about the election—especially about Donald Trump. The memo referred to the 1939 ‘Hatch’ Act.

<http://gizmodo.com/department-of-education-memo-includes-talking-points-ab-1788753871>

Americans became acutely aware of The Hatch Act in the past month after FBI Director James Comey made a surprise announcement just 11 days out from Election Day. His letter to Congress explained that the FBI was investigating emails found on Anthony Weiner’s computer, and it rankled Democrats, especially after it was discovered that they didn’t include anything remotely scandalous. Supporters of Hillary Clinton pointed to a long held tradition that forbids federal employees from trying to influence elections. The Hatch Act of 1939 was the formal law that banned that kind of interference.

An emailed memo, first requested through a Freedom of Information Act request in May, was finally released today. The memo specifically notes that media relations employees at the Department of Education had received “refresher” training on The Hatch Act.

The memo also included talking points for Department of Education employees who might be asked by members of the media about the election. The talking points include two headers: “Which Democratic candidate do you support” and “What do you think of Donald Trump?”

The first answer to both questions was supposed to be “I’m not here to discuss the candidates or the election...” The talking points then explain that “you should pivot from campaign to priorities,” though it does specify that employees can “set the record straight factually if one of the candidates says something inaccurate.”

Americans, who believed their pollsters and political commentators that Hillary Clinton would win the Presidency, guess that, *at the end of the day the joke’s on us, the voters. And perhaps on the Department of Education, which will no doubt face drastic cuts under a government controlled by Donald Trump and Republicans in both the House and the Senate.*

So, supporters of public education in their central Administration played the political game according to the rules, even when the FBI breaks those rules.

And those who support a liberal democracy, playing by the rules and public education are once again left with a perennial conundrum.

**How do those who support a genuinely liberal rather than sectarian, illiberal education system, deal with an opposition who are not constrained by or break both the rules of law and those of civility?**

The Answer for those in the Protestant Tradition?

**PROTEST**

And, over in America, on the gloomiest morning of the year – for public school supporters - there has been a successful protest against Charter schools as Diana Ravitch tells it:

**[A Letter from a Parent in Massachusetts Who Fought Question 2](#)**

[By dianeravitch](#)

[November 9, 2016 //4](#)

This came in my email this morning:

*For a short while in Boston last night, we were ecstatic. We beat the privatizers on Question 2, and we beat them across the state, with every demographic – except for the whitest, wealthiest towns. As Barbara Madeloni said from the stage at campaign headquarters, “We beat their money with our democracy.”*

*Our coalition victory against the privatizers was hard-earned and sweet. Our brave and beautiful young people were inspirational. Barbara Madeloni was electrifying. We were the righteous students, parents, and union members.*

*And then, as the national results started coming in and it became clear that Clinton was in trouble, DFER was spotted in the back of the hotel ballroom. As was Marty Walz, former state legislator-turned-paid-shill for the charter industry.*

*Some of us – those who’d been door-knocking, who had made calls, created charts, sent tweets, educated our neighbors, debated on stage – became angry. The Yes on 2 campaign, funded by so-called Democrats with zero history of being on the side of working people and the disenfranchised, had forced us to focus on a state measure, for months and months and months, at the exclusion of the presidential campaign. Not a single one of my comrades working themselves to exhaustion – unpaid – to defeat the ballot measure was also volunteering for Hilary. We couldn’t be in two places at once, and we rightly felt the urgency of defeating Question 2. We were also keenly aware that our colleagues in other parts of the country were counting on us to stop the charter tide in Massachusetts.*

*DFER and Marty Walz heard from us loud and clear last night. We let them know that their support for an expensive, divisive, diversionary campaign will not be forgotten.*

*Question 2 and the charlatans behind it went down in flames last night. Our bright spot on this dismal morning.*

[Diane Ravitch's blog](#)

A site to discuss better education for all  
« [Please Watch This Wonderful Video: Zapatos  
The Morning After](#) »

## [Good News on a Gloomy Night: Question 2 in Massachusetts Fails Overwhelmingly](#)

[By dianeravitch](#)  
[November 9, 2016](#) //  
[146](#)

All the Presidential polls were wrong. Clinton appeared to be headed for a big victory until FBI Director James Comey informed Congress that he had discovered a new trove of emails. He decided there was no problem on the Sunday before the election. I can't help but think that she was never able to revive the momentum after Comey's intervention. And so we have a President-elect who has never held public office, has no governmental experience, has made statements that are racist, misogynist, and xenophobic. His party will control Congress. He will select at least one and possibly two or three Supreme Court justices.

On the subject of education, he has shown little interest. He held one press conference at a for-profit charter school in Ohio and promised \$20 billion in federal funds for charters and vouchers, transferred from existing programs. He has shown no interest in public education.

But there is a piece of good news in the midst of a dark night for public education.

Voters in Massachusetts [overwhelmingly defeated Question 2](#), by a margin of about 62%-38%. Question 2 would have permitted the addition of 12 charter schools every year into the indefinite future.

A vibrant coalition of parents, educators, and students withstood a barrage of dark money and won. They organized, mobilized, knocked on doors, rallied, and they won. More than 200 school committees passed resolutions against Question 2. None supported it.

The bottom line that unified opponents of the measure was that charters would drain funding from the public schools.

Proponents spent at least \$22 million, most of it from out of state donors. Big givers were billionaires and hedge fund managers.

This was the first contest over charter schools in which the key issues became public: the billionaire funding from out of state; the deceptive advertising that flooded the airwaves; the opponents' recognition that the charter movement was an assault on public schools, an effort to privatize them.

**On a sad night for the nation, it is heartening to see that the people defended their public schools...and won.**

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