

# Trump directives on education draw strong reaction

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President Donald Trump's executive orders directing public funds to support "educational choice" and ending funding for curriculum perceived to promote "anti-American ideologies" drew swift and strongly worded responses.

"It is the policy of my Administration to support parents in choosing and directing the upbringing and education of their children," Trump stated in his executive order, "[Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families](#)," issued Jan. 29.

The order—issued during "School Choice Week"—directs the Secretary of Education within 60 days to issue guidance about how states can use federal funds to "support K-12 educational choice initiatives." It also instructs him to prioritize "education freedom" in discretionary grant programs.

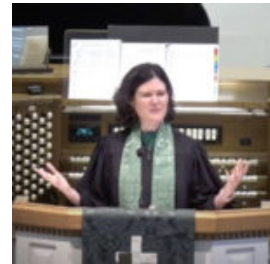
The directive also includes orders to the secretaries of Health and Human Services, Defense and the Interior related to "education choice."

The order to the Secretary of State specifically instructs him to review ways military-connected families can use Department of Defense funds "to attend the schools of their choice, including private, faith-based, or public charter schools."

Trump's executive order praises states that have "enacted universal K-12 scholarship programs, allowing families—rather than the government—to choose the best educational setting for their children."

He issued the order one day after the [Texas Senate Committee on Education K-16](#) heard testimony on—and endorsed—a bill that would create an educational savings account program designed to help parents pay for their children’s private-school education with public funds.

## ‘Public funds ... for public uses’



Amanda Tyler

Amanda Tyler, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, said her agency “adamantly opposes” the Trump executive order, “which purports to divert taxpayer funds away from public schools and other federally funded programs to private schools, including to private religious schools.”

“Students across the country rely on public schools as the only education system where their freedom of religion and other civil rights are guaranteed,” Tyler said.

“Public funds should be for public uses. The government should not compel taxpayers to furnish funds in support of religion, regardless of whether they adhere to that religion or not.”

Rather than meeting the nation’s educational needs, she characterized the executive order as “another example of the Trump administration making a grab for power that puts specific private interests over public interest and violates our constitutional order.”

“As people of faith, we celebrate our country’s freedom of religion and oppose attempts to entangle government in religious matters in this way,” Tyler said.

“Religious education is best left to houses of worship and other religious institutions that are funded with the voluntary contributions of adherents of those faiths, free from federal funding and the accompanying strings.”

## **‘Part of the Project 2025 playbook’**

Similarly, Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, emphasized the need to direct public funds to public schools, not private religious schools.

“Rather than funding private religious schools that can discriminate and indoctrinate, Trump should focus on providing adequate resources to our country’s public schools that are open to all students and serve 90 percent of America’s children,” Laser said.

School voucher programs “only provide ‘school choice’ for a select few, primarily wealthy families whose children never attended public schools in the first place, and for the private, predominantly religious, schools that can pick and choose which students to accept,” she said.

Expanding private school voucher programs is “part of the Project 2025 playbook for undermining our public education system and our democracy,” she asserted.

“Christian nationalists want to divert public money to private religious schools, even as they continue to strive to impose their narrow religious beliefs on public schoolchildren,” Laser said.

“Parents who care about their children’s education and taxpayers who care about quality public schools that are the building blocks of our communities

should vehemently oppose this scheme.”

## **‘White Christian nationalist disinformation’**

Laser also strongly criticized another Trump executive order, “[Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schools](#).” The order asserts “parents have witnessed schools indoctrinate their children in radical, anti-American ideologies while deliberately blocking parental oversight.”

Laser called the executive order “an attack on our public schools” that “seeks to turn them into re-education camps for white Christian nationalist disinformation.”

The executive order calls for the creation of a strategy for eliminating federal funds “for illegal and discriminatory treatment and indoctrination in K-12 schools, including based on gender ideology and discriminatory equity ideology.”

It also calls for reestablishing the President’s Advisory 1776 Commission to promote “patriotic education.” The commission was created during the first Trump administration and terminated by President Joe Biden.

Laser asserted the order would “advance narrow Christian nationalist beliefs about gender and a white-washed American history.”

“We know from last time that this commission is bent on tearing down the separation of church and state instead of lifting it up as an American original, a founding principle of this nation,” she said.

In contrast, Terry Schilling, president of the American Principles Project, insisted “America’s public education system is a disaster,” and Trump’s order helps to “bring sanity back to America’s schools.”

“What has happened in American education is a travesty that calls for a powerful and decisive response. Fortunately, President Trump has shown he is up to the challenge,” Schilling said.

“Our tax dollars should only go towards providing kids with a real education, not teaching them to discriminate based on race or confusing them about basic biology.”