
John McCain

U.S. Senator ~ Arizona

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SENATOR JOHN McCAIN INTRODUCES NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ACT

(<http://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=EB98B993-6B7E-45AC-81AF-1A83558CE809>)

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) today introduced the *Native American Education Opportunity Act*, legislation that would offer customized education options, including private tuition scholarships to Native American K-12 students living on Indian reservations as an alternative to attending Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools, which, despite their high cost, include some of the most underperforming schools in the nation.

“It is unconscionable to leave Native American students stranded in failing schools when we can create the option of expanding educational opportunities on Indian reservations now,” **said Senator John McCain.** “I am proud to introduce this bill that would give Native American parents the option of using BIE funds to pay for private school tuition, tutors, books, and other educational needs through a state-administered education savings account. I believe that encouraging private schools to compete with BIE schools can improve K-12 education, even in the most remote parts of Indian Country.”

“Native American parents have always had few options for educational excellence and have very specific needs,” **said the Honorable Navajo Nation Council Delegate Jonathan Hale, Chairman of Health, Education and Human Services Committee.**

"The Native American Education Opportunity Act brings the power into the hands of Native American parents who know better than anyone else what their children need in order to be challenged."

"I've always believed education is the key to lifting up tribal communities yet our Native children are dead last in all important education matrices including having the highest dropout rate," said **Arizona State Senator Carlyle Begay, R-LD7**. "This begs the question, 'Are American Indian children failing the education system or is the education system failing American Indian children?' This bill is a step toward rebuilding our communities through education by giving all tribal parents the options and resources they are requesting."

"When parents are empowered to choose the best school for their kids, we all win," said **Liz Dreckman, Executive Director of Arizona School Choice Trust**. "I am proud to support the Native American Education Opportunity Act because all children deserve a quality education."

"We are thankful to Senator McCain for seeing the need to empower parents in tribal communities to make choices and advocate for their children," said **Kim Martinez, Communications Associate for Arizona Federation for Children**. "School choice is the first step in lifting up families in reservation areas and leading them toward a better future."

Specifically, the *Native American Education Opportunity Act* would provide educational options for Native American children and their parents by:

- Offering customized education options including private school tuition to Native American K-12 students living on Indian reservations as an alternative to attending BIE schools.
- Funding these education options by using up to 90% of the funds that BIE would have spent on each individual student. States with existing Education Savings Account (ESA) programs would administer the scholarship (AZ, MS, FL and NV).
- Benefitting BIE's budget by allowing the school system to retain the remaining at least 10% of funds that are not granted to the student.
- Fostering competition between private schools and BIE schools on rural Indian reservations, which can make both school systems better.

The growing list of supporters of this legislation includes the Arizona Federation for Children, Arizona Free Enterprise Club, Arizona School Choice Trust, Choose A School, Christian Schools of Arizona, Empower Mississippi, Foundation for Excellence in Education, Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, Goldwater Institute, Institute for Better Education, Institute for Justice, Mississippi Center for Public Policy, Step up for Students and TOPS for Kids.

The text of the legislation is here

(http://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/fae15a0b-60a8-4ad8-afea-bb6165e0d7ce/3-17-16-native-american-education-opportunity-act.pdf).

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