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## Black Ministers Challenge NAACP on School Choice

By Clarence V. McKee



Black pastors in Florida are sick and tired and aren't going to take it anymore. Over 100 black ministers from throughout Florida have urged the Florida NAACP to drop a lawsuit with the Florida teachers union challenging a state tax credit program that provides low income families corporate-funded vouchers to attend private schools.

The group, the Florida African American Ministers Alliance for Parental Choice (FAAMAPC), includes Tallahassee black newspaper and radio station owner R.B. Holmes, pastor of the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Tallahassee, who said the NAACP was "on the wrong side of history."

If the suit is successful, 78,000 poor mostly black and Hispanic children will be removed from private schools where "they are thriving, and returned to public schools where they were not. This would be a monumental injustice."

Holmes is right!

The NAACP, teachers union and much of the Democratic party liberal opposition to parental choice for low income parents is shameful.

More than 5,000 people have signed a petition urging the NAACP to drop the suit against the 15-year-old program. But does the Florida NAACP really care? Apparently not. It seems to march to the tune of different drummer, Florida's Democratic party and the education union establishment.

This wasn't the first time the grass roots rose up to protest the liberal teachers union.

In January, nearly 11,000 private-school students, program supporters, school choice advocacy groups, and religious leaders went to Tallahassee in an over 240 bus convoy. Their mission. To ask the state's largest teachers union to drop its lawsuit. They argued that vouchers under the program were the only way for many families to escape under-performing schools.

During the rally, Bishop Victor Curry of Miami's New Birth Baptist Church asked the key question, "Why in the world would the union challenge the program that helps disadvantaged families?" Good question.

My answer. Because its actions, and those of its counterparts around the country, show that it only cares about protecting its educational monopoly and stranglehold on

inner city schools and children.

The Florida NAACP, like its national parent — and much of the black Democrat political, academic and journalism establishment — is no stranger to jumping in bed with liberal leaning groups, defending their causes and giving them black credibility.

Two years ago in this space, I criticized the same Florida NAACP for "supporting a very flawed and misleading proposed Florida constitutional amendment" to legalize so-called medical marijuana. I accused it and amendment sponsors of "perpetrating a cruel hoax on the public (and) using emotion, compassion and deception as shields to hide the flaws and loopholes in a dangerous proposal."

Thankfully, Florida voters rebuffed the NAACP and the amendment sponsors at the polls. Hopefully Florida courts will do the same to the union lawsuit.

Holmes, who is also a former president of the Jacksonville NAACP and lifetime member, elaborated his views in an opinion article in the Tallahassee Democrat saying that the scholarship "does nothing to harm public schools, or to undermine the NAACP's mission."

He rightfully concludes that the "NAACP . . . fought for equal opportunity for all boys and girls, not just those fortunate enough to live in a wealthy zip code with a high-performing public school."

If you don't think Holmes and Florida's black clergy don't have political clout on the issue of school choice, just ask former Florida Governor Charlie Crist who, running as a Democrat, rejected black clergy and supported the teachers unions in his bid to defeat Republican Governor Rick Scott in 2014.

He could have been Governor again but he listened to liberal Democrats and chose the wrong side. Scott sided with school choice — and won!

George Farrell, Chairman of BlakPAC, said it well, "But for Crist siding with the liberal predominantly white teachers' unions against choice for poor black parents, he could have won."

While Hillary Clinton and the Florida NAACP are in bed with the teachers union which stands against school choice for low income parents, Donald Trump, who has expressed support for school choice, should make it clear he stands with Florida's black ministers on this important issue in this important state.