

**TO: Alabama Federation for Children**  
**FROM: Jim McLaughlin and Rob Schmidt**  
**RE: Alabama Statewide Survey – Key Findings**  
**Date: November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

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**SURVEY SUMMARY: A plurality of voters in Alabama favors the Accountability Act. Support increases after hearing about the tax credit scholarship program and voters want to see the caps increased on these scholarships so more children can participate.**

➤ **Voters in Alabama favor the concept of school choice.**

- ✓ Almost two in three (65%) favor the concept of school choice, which gives parents the right to use the tax dollars associated with their child’s education to send their child to the public or private school which better serves their needs. Three in ten (30%) oppose the concept of school choice.

Generally speaking, would you say you favor or oppose the concept of school choice? School choice gives parents the right to use the tax dollars associated with their child’s education to send their child to the public or private school which better serves their needs.

	Tot.	Child In School		Wom.
		Yes	No	W. Child
Favor	65%	76%	61%	81%
Oppose	30%	20%	33%	15%
<b>DK/Refused</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>

- Voters with children under the age of 18 in school are more likely to favor school choice, 76% to 20%. More specifically, women with children in school are most likely, 81% to 15%.

➤ **In spite of all of the political noise in this year’s Alabama elections, a plurality of voters supports the Alabama Accountability Act, particularly the tax credit scholarship program. Voters also favor increasing the cap on these scholarships.**

- ✓ Voters favor the Alabama Accountability Act by a greater than two to one margin, 44% to 17%.

Favor/Oppose: “The Alabama Accountability Act”

	Tot.
Favor	44%
Oppose	17%
<b>DK/Refused</b>	<b>39%</b>

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- ✓ Greater than two in three (67%) favor the Accountability Act after hearing about the tax credit scholarship program, which allows for low income families to apply for scholarships to send their children to the public or private school of their choice. Only 26% oppose.

Last year, the Alabama State Legislature passed into law the Alabama Accountability Act. One portion of the law created a tax credit scholarship program. This program allows for low income families to apply for scholarships to send their children to the public or private school of their choice. These scholarships are funded by private donations from businesses and individuals in exchange for a tax credit. Knowing this, do you favor or oppose the Alabama Accountability Act?

	Tot.
Favor	67%
Oppose	26%
<b>DK/Refused</b>	<b>7%</b>

- ✓ Additionally, voters favor increasing the cap on these educational scholarships so more children can participate, 58% to 32%.

Currently, the Alabama Accountability Act limits the amount of educational scholarships that can be awarded to students. As a result, many children in Alabama are currently on waiting lists until the money becomes available for them to receive these scholarships. Knowing this, would you favor or oppose increasing the cap on these educational scholarships so more children can participate in this program?

	Tot.
Favor	58%
Oppose	32%
<b>DK/Refused</b>	<b>10%</b>

- ✓ And when it comes to the recipients of these educational scholarships in the Accountability Act, 58% believe that all children, particularly low income families, should have access to these scholarships regardless of what school district they are assigned to. Twenty-one percent (21%) say only children in failing public schools should have access to these scholarships. Only 16% say that these scholarships should not be provided at all.

(Some) who say that ALL children, particularly those in low income families, should have access to these scholarships, regardless of what school district they are assigned to

(Others) who say that ONLY children in failing public schools should have access to these scholarships which would allow for them to attend another non-failing public school or private school of their choice OR

(Those) who say that we should not provide these scholarships to any students at all.

	Tot.	Child In School		Wom.
		Yes	No	W. Child
All Children	58%	60%	57%	60%
Only/Failing Schools	21%	27%	19%	31%
No Scholarships	16%	12%	18%	8%
<b>DK/Refused</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1%</b>

- Once again, those who have children in school are more inclined to support these policies. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of those with children in school believe that students should have access to these scholarships, as do 91% of women with children in school.

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- **The Alabama Education Association has a net negative opinion rating and voters are more inclined to believe it is more concerned with politics than doing what is best for students.**
  - ✓ The plurality (45%) has a negative opinion of the Alabama Education Association, while 39% are favorable. Twelve percent (12%) have no opinion and only 4% have never heard of the A.E.A. It is also important to note the downward trend since March of 2012, when 52% were favorable to the A.E.A. and 37% were unfavorable.

**Opinion: The Alabama Education Association, also known as the A.E.A.**

	<u>3/12</u>	<u>3/13</u>	<u>6/14</u>	<u>9/14</u>	<u>11/14</u>	<u>Child In School</u>		<u>Wom.</u>
						<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>W. Child</u>
Favorable	52%	48%	40%	37%	39%	31%	41%	31%
Unfavorable	37%	28%	35%	35%	45%	52%	42%	53%
<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Never Heard Of</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>NET</b>	<b>+15</b>	<b>+20</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>-21</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-22</b>

- Parents with children in school are more likely to be unfavorable towards the A.E.A., 31% favorable to 52% unfavorable.
- ✓ By a large 84% to 12% margin, voters agree that “the A.E.A. should stop spending tens of millions of dollars on political campaign and instead should use that money to help Alabama’s students.”

**Agree/Disagree: “The Alabama Education Association, also known as the A.E.A., should stop spending tens of millions of dollars a year on political campaigns and activities and instead should use that money to help Alabama’s students by hiring more teachers and giving good teachers pay raises.”**

	<b>Tot.</b>	<b>Teacher Household</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Agree	84%	70%	88%
Disagree	12%	25%	9%
<b>DK/Refused</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>

- Even households with current or retired public school teachers agree with this statement by a decisive 70% to 25% margin.
- ✓ Furthermore, when given a choice, 27% say the A.E.A. is a strong advocate for public education in Alabama, compared to 62% who say the A.E.A. has become nothing more than an extreme liberal special interest group that cares more about political power than it does in doing what is best for our students.

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Which of the following comes closest to your view regarding Alabama's public teachers' union, also known as the Alabama Education Association? (Choices Rotated)

(Some/Others) who say the Alabama Education Association is a strong advocate for public education in Alabama and does a good job looking out for what's best for our students and teachers. They say that while they may not agree with everything, the A.E.A. generally has the best interests of public schools and teachers in mind.

OR

(Others/Some) who say the Alabama Education Association has become nothing more than an extreme liberal special interest group that cares more about political power than it does in doing what is best for our students and public school teachers. They also say the A.E.A. has spent over \$20 million this year alone running negative political attack ads where that money could have been used instead to hire more teachers and raise the pay of good teachers.

	<b>Tot.</b>
Strong Advocate	27%
Liberal Special Interest	62%
<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>12%</b>

**BOTTOM LINE:** Voters support the concepts of recently passed educational choice legislation and believe more parents should be given more options to better educate their children. Policies such as increasing educational scholarships garner broad support.

### Demographic Summary:

<b>Children In School</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	26%	Male	47%
No	73%	Female	53%
<b>Teacher Household</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	20%	Under 40	21%
No	78%	41 – 55	25%
<b>Party</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Media Market</b>	<b>%</b>
Republican	39%	Birmingham	40%
Democrat	30%	Huntsville	20%
Independent	25%	<b>Race</b>	<b>%</b>
		White	65%
		African American	26%
		Rest of State	11%

*\*Totals may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding and refusal rates*

**Methodology:** This survey of 500 likely general election voters in the state of Alabama was conducted from November 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014. All interviews were conducted via telephone by professional interviewers. Interview selection was random within predetermined election units. To increase coverage, this sample was supplemented with 100 interviews of cell-phone users. These samples were then combined and structured to correlate with actual voter turnout in a statewide general election. This poll of 500 likely general election voters has an accuracy of +/- 4.5% at a 95% confidence interval. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.