RESULTS

AMERICAN FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
2018 ELECTION IMPACT REPORT
Dear Friends,

In 2018, the American Federation for Children (AFC) and our affiliated political organizations once again invested heavily to defend and expand educational choice majorities in the states. Our work to elect pro-educational choice state policymakers and defeat opponents is crucial to passing high-quality legislation and ultimately to enrolling tens of thousands of additional children in school choice programs.

As the nation’s largest educational choice advocacy organization, we are in business to help as many families as possible access the best educational environment for their children. The families who benefit from choice programs are up against powerful and entrenched special interests, including the teachers’ unions. While we cannot match these special interests dollars for dollar, our election team at AFC participates in hundreds of strategically chosen and competitive races in the states, and this year we won 77% of those races.

Our goal for every election year is simple: defend and expand educational choice legislative majorities across the country. And after the elections are over, our team moves quickly to work with state policymakers to enact bold legislation that will expand educational choice, create educational opportunity, and ultimately improve educational outcomes for America’s students.

Our election efforts this year helped parents across the country make their voices heard about providing all educational options for families. Whether it’s a public school, private school, charter school, virtual academy, home school or a blend of these choices—every family, especially lower income families, deserves the freedom to choose the best educational environment for their child.

Very truly yours,

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OUR MISSION

The American Federation for Children and AFC Growth Fund seek to empower families, especially lower-income families, with the freedom to choose the best K–12 education for their children.
Primary/Runoff Elections: School choice candidates supported by AFC and its allies prevailed in 74.4% of races.

General Election: School choice candidates supported by AFC and its allies prevailed in 79.1% of races.
AFC engaged with voters through mail, digital ads, billboards, TV and radio ads, and door-to-door canvassing.

AFC invested in a total of **375 races** in the primary and general elections.

AFC participated in **12 states**.
AFC’s 2018 National School Choice Poll conducted by Beck Research showed 63% support for school choice—including 72% from Latinos and 66% from African Americans.

Education Next, a journal from Harvard and Stanford, showed that support for publicly funded scholarships to private schools, also known as vouchers, increased from 45% last year to 54% this year—including 67% of Hispanics, up from 49% percent of Hispanics last year.

GenForward, a survey of millennials, showed that 87% of African Americans, 71% of Asian Americans, and 84% of Latinos support school vouchers for lower-income students.

It’s no surprise that there were many victories for candidates who supported school choice. Public polling from 2018 showed that voters are strongly in favor of school choice:
AFC’s work in Alabama during the election cycle was focused on reinforcing and expanding support for school choice in the State House, where Alabama had among the highest number of open seats (25) in the nation. AFC’s objective was to identify passionate candidates on the issue of school choice and help guide them through the primary and general elections. AFC’s in-state committee, Alabama Federation for Children PAC (ALFC PAC), made strategic investments in several key legislative districts in support of school choice candidates. The results will prove to be important when it comes to passing legislation in future sessions.

ALFC PAC-supported candidates went 5 and 3 during the primary and 9 and 0 during the general, which included flipping an anti-school choice Democratic-controlled seat, defending an incumbent who chairs the Education Policy Committee in the State House, and protecting two other school choice ally incumbents. ALFC PAC also invested in three open seats, each with Republican candidates who were school choice supporters.

In the primary, for the first time, ALFC PAC was able to invest in a Democratic primary candidate who publicly supported school choice against an anti-school choice incumbent. While the challenger did not prevail, it is an important step in the state to see Democrats publicly supporting school choice programs, a truly non-partisan issue.

Overall, ALFC PAC work during the primary and general elections will ensure that school choice remains a priority for both legislative bodies in Alabama.

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<tr>
<th>ALABAMA CANDIDATE HIGHLIGHTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>During the general election, ALFC PAC supported Rep. Terri Collins, Chairwoman of the House Education Policy Committee, as she defended her seat in a competitive race where her opponent tried to use her support for school choice against her.</td>
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<td>ALFC PAC also helped Andrew Sorrell win in HD 3, which had been under Democratic control for decades. ALFC PAC was one of only two major state groups that supported Mr. Sorrell in the primary.</td>
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<td>Another candidate ALFC PAC supported, Debbie Wood, successfully ran in the competitive open seat in House District 38 and brings a business-focused point-of-view to the statehouse. AFLC PAC supported Wood in the primary, runoff and general elections.</td>
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Arizona

For several years in Arizona, AFC has made consistent progress in advancing school choice legislation, despite having an inconsistent school choice majority in each chamber. This election cycle, the fervor of a massive education funding movement and the aftermath of a teacher strike fueled the resolve of our opponents. The goal of the 2018 elections was to defend school choice champions in both the House and Senate against strong threats from opponents, while trying to maintain the slim school choice margin.

AFC achieved these goals through independent expenditures, using direct mail, radio, digital media, and phone calls in support of, or in opposition to, candidates in 14 races in the Primary and in 17 races in the General Election. Twelve AFC-supported candidates were successful in each.

With legislators who are committed to school choice, AFC looks forward to strengthening charter schools, pursuing administrative reforms to Arizona's strong education savings account program, growing the program to serve even more students, and defending Arizona's four private school choice programs.

Arkansas

AFC’s work in Arkansas was a mix of support for incumbents, challengers, and candidates in open seats. Through its in-state committee, Arkansas Federation for Children Action Fund (ARFC-AF), AFC supported educational choice candidates across the state who were committed to providing educational options for all students. Several ARFC-AF-supported candidates ran in difficult races, with polling showing these candidates with uphill battles, but ARFC-AF stands with candidates who stand for students and unabashedly support school choice. Overall, six ARFC-AF-supported candidates were successful in their elections.

ARKANSAS CANDIDATE HIGHLIGHTS

State Rep. Karilyn Brown successfully defended her seat in House District 41 to serve for a third term. Brown knows that all students deserve a chance to succeed, and that success begins with having access to quality education options. Brown will continue fighting for increased educational options, including access to skills-based training programs.

State Rep. Bob Ballinger successfully challenged an incumbent Senator and prevailed in a three-way general election to represent Senate District 5. Ballinger wants to provide all schools with the tools to be innovative in their classrooms, and he knows that all students, regardless of zip code, should have access to quality education.

Judith Goodson ran in the open seat election for House District 35, and although she was unable to prevail against an education establishment-supported candidate, Goodson demonstrated her unwavering support to provide education options to all students. Goodson, who puts students before the system, will be a lifelong advocate for educational choice.
Florida

During the 2018 elections in Florida, the teachers’ union targeted pro-school choice Democratic and Republican incumbents and candidates, spending over $3.5 million to defeat those who stand with parents rather than the system. While Florida Federation for Children (FFC) and the Florida Education Empowerment PAC (FEE PAC) were outspent two-and-a-half to one, both committees’ messaging and parent engagement made the difference in closely contested statewide and legislative races.

Overall, FFC and FEE PAC spent over $1.6 million to back candidates that support school choice options and parent empowerment. These candidates were successful in 24 out of 38 races over the course of the year.

During the primary, the focus was on supporting pro-school choice Democratic candidates and incumbents. Four out of seven FFC-supported Democratic candidates won their primaries. Two of the candidates were school-choice supportive incumbents who overcame the teachers’ union’s massive efforts to defeat them. Utilizing digital media, direct mail, parent live phone banking, radio and print media, FFC connected with Democratic voters, and parents in particular, who turned out and voted for the pro-school choice Democrats.

The General Election had many hotly contested legislative and statewide races, including an open Governor’s race. Overall, FFC and FEE PAC were successful in 18 out of the 26 races they invested in. Prior to the election, there was a school choice majority in the State Senate and in the State House. These bipartisan majorities continue into next year and include the addition of two new Democratic school choice supporters in the House.

One of the highest priorities in the General Election was keeping the State Senate’s pro-school choice majority, and the number-one priority was supporting the election of Ron DeSantis as Governor, an unabashed school choice advocate, who faced avid anti-school choice Democrat, Andrew Gillum.

Digital ads in the Governor’s race targeted over 150,000 parent voters and featured a Gillum press conference in which he stated that he wanted to bring the state’s tax credit program “to a conclusion.” Video ads featuring Desantis’s statements in support of school choice, as well as statements made by Gillum regarding his opposition to school choice, were targeted to parents. These ads reached 114,657 unique voters, generated 39,241 likes and 1.2 million impressions. This digital effort was bolstered by an extensive mail campaign and a comprehensive online voter guide.

Additionally, a digital campaign focused on charter school parents and Gillum’s position on defunding the state’s charter schools resulted in 2.8 million impressions. More than seven-thousand people clicked through to the school choice voter guide website, voteschoolchoice.com. Overall, the various digital campaigns in the Governor’s race generated 3.98 million impressions from voter audiences.

Similar to FFC activity in the 2016 elections, scholarship parents made more than 43,000 phone calls and sent 35,000 individual text messages to other parents in key primary and general election races. Parents also knocked on doors of other parents in key State Senate races to discuss the differences among the candidates and why their votes were vitally important in deciding the election outcomes. These efforts were supported by direct mail and digital ads educating parents on the candidates’ positions on school choice and driving turnout.

Overall, during the 2018 election season, FFC and FEE PAC produced 59 different digital ads, 13 radio spots, and 61 unique mailers educating parents and targeted voters on pro-school choice candidates. State Senate candidates featured scholarship families in three different television ads and two digital and print ads demonstrating the importance of school choice in their specific races.

**FLORIDA CANDIDATE HIGHLIGHTS**

In the primary election, FFC and FEE PAC had two major victories in House Democratic primaries:

**Incident Rep. Kimberly Daniels (D-Jacksonville) faced major opposition from a union-backed school board member who also supported the prior lawsuit to end the tax credit scholarship program. Utilizing parent-to-parent phone calls, digital ads, and mail, Rep. Daniels overcame an extremely well-funded opponent to win by nearly 10 points.**

In an open House race in Miami, FFC and FEE PAC played a significant role in supporting James Bush III, who was out-funded 20-to-one but won his race by nine points. His opponent was heavily supported by the teachers’ union and Tallahassee lobbyists and was seen as a guaranteed winner. This race was the biggest upset victory in the Democratic primary for state legislature.
During the 2018 primary elections, AFC’s affiliated political committees defended 13 strong school choice incumbents from both sides of the aisle. AFC also supported six candidates in open primary seats who were ultimately victorious in the general elections and will be joining the Georgia General Assembly as strong school choice supporters.

In both the primary and the general elections, the committees supported Geoff Duncan (R) in his successful statewide campaign for Lt. Governor. In the general election, the committees ran a television commercial in the Atlanta market as well as accompanying targeted digital ads. Duncan, a school choice champion actively campaigning on the issue, is now poised to bring fresh leadership to the Senate with school choice as a policy priority.

In the general election, AFC supported Brian Kemp over Stacey Abrams in the race for Governor. AFC educated Georgians with an issue ad on television and through digital outlets highlighting Abrams’s plan to repeal Georgia’s tax credit scholarship program while AFC’s affiliated committees ran radio ads and engaged in targeted phone-banking to support Kemp for Governor.

On the legislative side, AFC supported 17 candidates, successfully unseating two anti-school choice incumbents and successfully defending six school choice champions. AFC’s committees also supported a candidate who won in an open seat previously held by a school choice opponent.

Unfortunately, in what news outlets dubbed as a “blue tsunami” sweeping through metro Atlanta, several incumbent Republican school choice champions lost their re-election bids. Despite these losses, though, with a new Governor’s administration and a strong new Lt. Governor at the helm in the Senate, Georgia is well-positioned to make exciting advancements in school choice in the coming years.

**GEORGIA CANDIDATE HIGHLIGHTS**

Rep. Mike Glanton and Rep. Valencia Stovall are two Democrats who are stalwarts for school choice in the House. Because of their position on this one issue, both face primary opposition each election cycle. AFC proudly defended these two champions for children once again.

The election for Governor in Georgia painted a stark contrast and a clear choice. Stacey Abrams campaigned on repealing Georgia’s tax credit scholarship program, which would have taken scholarships away from more than 13,000 students—most of whom are from middle- and low-income families. At the same time, Brian Kemp called for an expansion of the program as well as for the creation of a pilot Education Savings Account program.

Lt. Governor-elect Geoff Duncan was a school choice champion during his time as a state representative. As a candidate for Lt. Governor, he traveled all over the state calling for student-based funding, expansion of Georgia’s existing school choice programs, such as the Special Needs Scholarship and tax credit scholarship program, as well as the creation of Education Savings Accounts. His election will help reshape the policy priorities of the Senate and the future of school choice in the state.
Indiana

In Indiana, AFC’s in-state ally, Hoosiers for Quality Education PAC, supported numerous educational choice candidates across the state who were successful in this year’s primary and general elections. These victories validate much of the highly popular education choice reforms in the state over the past decade.

Hoosiers for Quality Education PAC engaged in 16 contests in the primary and in 70 in the general. Notably, HQE PAC engaged in six open primaries, and the HQE PAC-endorsed candidates won in each. In the general election, HQE PAC endorsed candidates in ten open seats, and all ten candidates were successful. With these victories, and despite losing one seat in the Senate and three in the House, Republicans maintained super-majorities in both chambers, and support for school choice is expected to remain strong.

Indiana Candidate Highlights

Linda Rogers successfully defeated 36-year incumbent Senator Joe Zakas in the primary election. Linda is a retired public school teacher who supports educational choice and embraced the importance of quality education and educational options throughout her campaign and in her campaign materials. She was successful in her general election bid as well, and will begin her term this session.

Travis Holdman, the chair of the Senate Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee, was in a highly targeted primary battle. He will remain a key fiscal leader in the Senate and will be a great ally for school choice efforts.

Dale DeVon, Republican incumbent in House District 5, had a tough general election race but was successful with HQE’s support. Representative DeVon has been a champion for educational choice and is a key ally on the House Education Committee.

Missouri

In the 2018 elections, support for school choice increased in both parties and both legislative chambers in Missouri. Local allies invested in 12 races, winning 10. The local allies invested in several other Republican and Democratic races, which produced additional victories for school choice candidates. Importantly, there are now more GOP legislative supporters in rural districts and more support from legislators with professional education experience. As a result, school choice support will be better represented in both chambers of the legislature.

Missouri Candidate Highlights

Cindy O’Laughlin, a successful business woman, former school board member, and longtime school choice advocate, was elected to the State Senate in a sprawling rural district.

Ben Baker, a small-town mayor, professor, and dean of students, successfully ran for State Representative as an education advocate and school choice supporter.

Senator Paul Wieland, a former school board member and long-time school choice supporter, was re-elected in a hotly contested race.

Representative Chuck Basye, a supporter of both expanding charter schools and private school choice, was re-elected. Last session, he was a member of the House Education Committee and was the Chair of the Education Savings Account subcommittee.

Mary Elizabeth Coleman, an attorney and City Council member, was elected to the State House. As the mother of six school-age children, she is deeply committed to education reform.

Dottie Bailey, a banker and the mother of two young children, was elected to the State House in a campaign that featured a video of her eloquently making the case for school choice.
During the 2018 election, AFC’s in-state committee, the Nevada Federation for Children PAC (NFC PAC), supported Democratic and Republican incumbents and newcomers who support the Nevada Education Choice Opportunity Scholarship Program.

It was NFC PAC’s second election cycle in Nevada, with the work this year largely centered on supporting candidates who will protect the progress made during the 2017 legislative session in making the one-time $20 million funding cap increase on the Opportunity Scholarship permanent. NFC PAC supported six successful candidates in the primary and twelve successful candidates during general elections through direct contributions and independent expenditures.

In the Governor’s race, Clark County Commissioner Steve Sisolak defeated pro-school choice Republican Attorney General Adam Laxalt, replacing Governor Brian Sandoval. This is the first time in 20 years that a Democrat will be in the Nevada Governor’s mansion. AFC is hopeful that Nevada parents will retain access to the Opportunity Scholarship and that bipartisan support for these issues continues to grow.

In the State Senate, NFC PAC supported Keith Pickard, a strong supporter of educational choice who actively engaged with many families in his district throughout the campaign to discuss the need for increased education options. Pickard won an open Senate seat in a very close race.

Republicans Melissa Hardy, Alexis Hansen, and Tom Roberts were all successful in their open seat contests. All three are education choice supporters.

NC Citizens for a Better Tomorrow worked independently and with a coalition of partner groups to engage in both the primary and general elections to support incumbents and newcomers who were committed to supporting school choice programs in the state. NC Citizens supported both Republicans and Democrats in this year’s election cycle.

While the overall results of the elections were mixed, AFC is confident that supporters will stand strong for students and protect existing educational choice options, including charter schools and the Opportunity Scholarship Program. Republicans retained simple majorities in both chambers, but with an anti-school choice Governor, the 2019 legislative session will be critical for protecting current programs. AFC, NC Citizens, and their allies will continue strengthening and growing school choice support among members, particularly with members of the Legislative Black Caucus, so that more students across the state have access to quality education options.
Due to term limits and early retirement, this year’s election cycle was guaranteed to result in significant membership changes in the Oklahoma Legislature. Thanks to AFC’s in-state committee, the Oklahoma Federation for Children Action Fund (OFC-AF), supporters of school choice will retain a strong voice in Oklahoma’s legislative debates.

In 2018, opponents of school choice were especially active and vocal in legislative races. The Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), the state’s largest teachers’ union, demanded that lawmakers oppose charter schools, education savings accounts, and tax credits for those who donate to scholarship funds. Another status-quo organization labeled numerous candidates “dangerous for public ed” in its voter guide.

Yet many candidates refused to bow to the OEA’s demands. Erroneously labeled as “dangerous,” lawmakers who support school choice easily won their races, including several backed by the OFC-AF. These candidates showed their districts that their support for school choice is not a detriment to the state and that it is time to prioritize students over a system.

OFC-AF was heavily involved in electing seven candidates, including incumbent lawmakers and new legislators, who support school choice. School choice supporters who won election in other races were so dominant that OFC-AF did not have to get involved, so it was free to devote resources elsewhere. School choice supporters elected this year join several other vocal supporters elected two years ago with the backing of OFC-AF.

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**OKLAHOMA CANDIDATE HIGHLIGHTS**

David Bullard, a veteran educator in rural schools who was named “teacher of the year” in 2017, was a school choice supporter elected to the Oklahoma Senate with the support of OFC-AF.

Brent Howard, an attorney in rural southwest Oklahoma, was easily elected to the Senate. The race was one in which status-quo forces tried to turn school choice support into a liability through mailers that attacked Howard because he was supported by OFC-AF. Those attacks failed miserably. Howard won with 65 percent of the vote.

Rep. Chad Caldwell, who authored legislation to augment Oklahoma’s successful tax credit scholarship program that benefits low-income children, easily won his re-election race.

Rep. Ryan Martinez, a reliable supporter of school choice legislation, prevailed over status-quo candidates in both the Republican primary and the general election with the support of OFC-AF.

Jay Steagall was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives despite being deployed in the Middle East for much of the campaign as a member of the Oklahoma Army National Guard. A strong supporter of school choice policies, he won with the backing of OFC-AF.

Ajay Pittman, a Democrat, won election in a majority-minority House District in Oklahoma City despite being labeled “dangerous” by status-quo forces due to her support for school choice.
In 2018, more seats were open in the Tennessee General Assembly than at any other time in the past 150+ years. Tennessee was also engaged in what were expected to be competitive races for Governor and U.S. Senate, both of which drove turnout to record levels.

For Governor, Republican Bill Lee soundly defeated Democrat Karl Dean, despite an 11th-hour series of ads linking Lee to recent pro-voucher efforts. Lee’s 21-point victory confirmed the Tennessee Federation for Children PAC’s (TFC PAC) polling: Tennessee voters overwhelmingly prefer candidates who support increasing parent choice in education. Even during the primary campaign, Bill Lee consistently affirmed the right of all parents to find the best educational setting for their children.

The large number of open seats in the state legislature gave TFC PAC an unprecedented opportunity to significantly grow the number of school choice supporters in the legislature, especially in the House of Representatives. By committing resources early to primary races, TFC PAC supported many winners in their bids for open seats. Later election activity supported candidates in the most competitive House and Senate races.

TFC PAC engaged in more than 20 races and nearly 70% of supported candidates won. These new legislators represent all three Grand Divisions of the state and show that school choice is a winning platform in places as diverse as Chattanooga and Memphis.

The new year will bring a new, pro-school choice Governor, new House leadership surrounded by a majority of pro-school choice representatives (for the first time in years), and a Senate that has passed voucher legislation in recent sessions. While getting legislation across the finish line is always a battle, the ingredients are in place for a great year for kids.

TENNESSEE CANDIDATE HIGHLIGHTS

Long-time supporters Representative Dawn White (R) and Senator Brian Kelsey (R) won their campaigns for the 13th and 31st Senate districts, respectively. Both were in tight races against candidates who defended the education status quo.

Tennessee’s strongest Democratic school choice supporter, Representative John DeBerry, Jr. (D) of Memphis, returns to the State House after a convincing primary win and uncontested general election. Voters in his district ranked education as one of their most important issues, and Rep. DeBerry has made education reform, including the passage of public and private school choice programs, one of his top priorities during his tenure in the General Assembly.

First-time Republican candidate Mark Cochran had little name recognition, but he indicated support for school choice. His opponent, Trey Winder, received the teachers’ union endorsement and was their second-highest priority race in the primary, according to campaign finance reports. Cochran won this race (HD 23) by 17 points after gaining traction by showing support for parents AND teachers looking for school options.
Wisconsin

Wisconsin continues to show its support for school choice, not only through continued growth in the enrollment of the state’s public, charter, and private choice programs, but also as evidenced by election outcomes.

Despite a tumultuous election cycle, Wisconsin maintained substantial margins of school choice support in both houses, with the Republicans losing only one seat in the Assembly for a 63-36 margin and gaining an additional seat in the Senate for a 19-14 majority. However, longtime champion Governor Scott Walker lost his re-election bid to Tony Evers, the state’s Superintendent of Public Instruction and school choice opponent.

School choice support in Wisconsin is not limited to only Republicans. The 2018 election saw the return of vocal advocate Democratic Representative Jason Fields and newly elected Democratic Representative Kalan Haywood, the youngest state representative in the country at age 19. Several other Democrats who have taken pragmatic positions on educational choice will also return.

In the races that AFC’s in-state committee actively participated in with independent expenditures, nine out of ten candidates won. AFC also supported an additional 32 candidates through direct contributions from AFC’s in-state committee, and ALL 32 won their respective races.

This election can be seen as reaffirmation that school choice is working in Wisconsin and is popular with voters.

Kentucky

Education issues were at the forefront of Kentucky’s elections this year, and voters again showed their support for those candidates who stand with families and support school choice. There were several candidates who ran on anti-school choice platforms, but as polling shows, school choice support across the Commonwealth is strong, and these candidates were ultimately defeated. Republicans maintained super-majorities in both legislative chambers. Also, nearly one-quarter of the members elected will be new to the legislature. 2019 will bring another busy legislative session and more opportunities to provide education options for all Kentucky students.

Iowa

AFC’s school choice allies in The Hawkeye State saw many successes in this year’s elections. Kim Reynolds, a strong school choice supporter, was elected to her first term as Governor. The Republicans increased their margins in the State Senate, where school choice support is strong. The State House remains Republican with a 54–46 majority under the leadership of Speaker Linda Upmeyer, who is also a school choice advocate.
With educational choice legislative majorities in our states, as well as supporters in many statewide offices, we expect a vibrant 2019 legislative session. We plan to take full advantage of these results by pushing to enact and expand robust, high-quality educational choice programs across the country. Furthermore, as always, you can count on the AFC team to continue to relentlessly advocate for the children enrolled in these programs and work to ensure that we can bring hope and opportunity to many more.
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