

CALIFORNIA STATE PTA

January 31, 2008

Legislation Information Alert

President Bush Proposes Vouchers; PTA Responds

The following information is taken from National PTA's *This Week in Washington* posted yesterday.

On January 28, 2008, President George W. Bush delivered his seventh annual [State of the Union address](#). During his speech, the president called on Congress to authorize \$300 million for "[Pell Grants for Kids](#)". The program would allow students in low-performing schools to transfer to faith-based and other non-public schools.

"We have seen how Pell Grants help low-income college students realize their full potential," Bush said. "Together, we have expanded the size and reach of these grants. Now, let's apply that same spirit to help liberate poor children trapped in failing public schools."

PTA National President Jan Harp Domene responded swiftly in an [open letter to Congress](#). Stating PTA's firm opposition to the Bush's proposal, Domene maintained that a national voucher program would deprive public schools of critically needed taxpayer funds by diverting those funds to private schools with no taxpayer or educational accountability. "Public funding for education needs to support and improve our nation's public schools," said Domene.

The following statements are excerpts from the letter.

"Vouchers benefit few students while taking scarce resources away from those who need it the most. Vouchers take money away from public schools, where 90 percent of all school-age children are enrolled, and give it to private schools. Public schools must meet federal state and local standards in a broad variety of areas including teacher qualifications, core curriculum and student achievement, and report their status to elected school boards and the taxpaying public. Private schools have no public accountability for the expenditure of public funds."

"If we are serious about keeping America competitive, we must be equally serious about our support of education. If we want student achievement to continue to rise, high-school graduation and college enrollment to increase, and the student drop-out rate to decrease, there is no better investment than public education. Children succeed when families, schools and communities work together. Together, we can make every child's potential a reality."

[Click here to view the full open letter to Congress.](#)