

# Poll Shows Nationwide Support for Emerging School Choice Program

## ***Sixty-two Percent of Americans Support Education Savings Accounts***

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 30, 2015) – More than six in 10 Americans support giving all students a new form of school choice emerging in the states known as education savings accounts (ESAs), according to a new national poll released today by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and Braun Research, Inc.

Nevada led the nation this spring when Gov. Brian Sandoval signed into law an ESA program that is open to all public school students. Any student who has attended public school for at least 100 days prior to signing up for an ESA may receive a portion or all of their education dollars in an account that can be used for expenses including classroom materials, tutoring, special education therapy, and even private school tuition.

According to the Friedman Foundation's annual *Schooling in America Survey*, support has increased for ESAs since 2014. Sixty-two percent of Americans said they favored an ESA system. That is a 6 percentage point increase in support over the previous year.

"ESAs are the new go-to program that allows dollars to follow children to the educational setting of their choice," said Robert Enlow, president and CEO of the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, the legacy foundation of Nobel economist Milton Friedman. "This poll shows Americans welcome a tool that will give parents and children lots of choice when it comes to providing them the best education possible."

Arizona, Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee also recently adopted ESA programs but restrict it to limited populations such as students with disabilities, military families or those from low-income families. However, the *2015 Schooling in America Survey* finds Americans prefer ESAs not be restricted to select populations, but be available to all children. When asked if "ESAs should only be available to families based on financial need" only 36 percent agreed. More than half (56 percent) said they disagreed with means testing.

"As families' learning needs evolve, ESAs have become the most flexible tool to help parents choose the educational ingredients that work best for their children, especially if their assigned school isn't serving them well," Enlow said.

The *2015 Schooling in America Survey* also found Americans prefer school choice as the greatest accountability remedy when schools don't perform up to standards.

Forty-one percent said supplying families with a voucher or scholarship would be a useful intervention. Smaller proportions liked other measures. More than one-quarter (26 percent) believe converting a district to a charter school is a good step, 25 percent prefer replacing school personnel, and 18 percent think the schools should be closed.

So far this year, nine states have adopted vouchers, tax-credit scholarships, and ESAs or expanded existing programs. During the 2014–15 school year, more than 352,000 pupils utilized vouchers, tax-credit scholarships, and ESAs in the United States. With recent action in the

states, that number will grow exponentially. In Nevada alone, more than 453,000 students will be eligible to use an ESA in 2016.

Braun Research interviewed 1,002 adults by live telephone calls during the final weeks of the school year, April 22 to May 12. The margin of error for the statistically representative national sample is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points. The Friedman Foundation funded this project, developed the survey instrument, conducted the analysis, and published the final report.

To learn more about the 2015 *Schooling in America Survey*, go to [edchoice.org/NationalSurvey2015](http://edchoice.org/NationalSurvey2015).

### **About the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice**

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and nonpartisan organization, solely dedicated to advancing Milton and Rose Friedman's vision of school choice for all children. First established as the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in 1996, the Foundation promotes school choice as the most effective and equitable way to improve the quality of K-12 education in America. The Friedman Foundation is dedicated to research, education, and outreach on the vital issues and implications related to school choice.

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