



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Lawsuit Against Dougco Voucher Program Draws Fire Institute Decries Attempt to Stifle Parental Choice through Courts**

GOLDEN, Colo. — The Independence Institute, Colorado's leading voice for free market policy, denounces a newly-filed lawsuit designed to stop a groundbreaking school board program from helping local families to pay for a chosen private education.

Today the American Civil Liberties Union and other school choice foes filed formal legal action to stop Douglas County families from using district vouchers to choose a private school.

"The lawsuit is disappointing, but really not surprising," said Education Policy Center director Pam Benigno. "Opponents of parental choice and educational freedom have tried this approach many times before. For the sake of the families who will benefit, we hope it fails."

On March 15, 2011, the Douglas County R-1 Board of Education unanimously approved a groundbreaking pilot program to issue publicly-funded "choice scholarships" to enroll at a "partner" private school. The program's design answers the objection in the Colorado Supreme Court's 4-3 ruling that struck down a statewide voucher program on the basis of an alleged violation of the state constitution's provision for local school board control of instruction.

Nearly 500 current Douglas County students who applied for a choice scholarship each will be able to use \$4,575 in tax funds to cover or defray private tuition costs for the 2011-12 school year. Thirty-one private schools applied to meet minimum requirements and become a "partner" school. Nineteen schools — including five independent, non-religious schools — thus far have been approved to receive choice scholarship students.

"What's exciting for Douglas County parents is they have a genuine range of options," Benigno said. "Parents can choose between different kinds of religious and non-religious schools. Unfortunately, some people find certain choices offensive."

Along with a number of local community members and school leaders, Benigno and senior education policy analyst Ben DeGrow served on the Douglas County School Choice Task Force that helped to craft a number of district policy recommendations, including for the establishment of a private school parental choice program.

The Independence Institute is a non-partisan, non-profit public policy research organization based in Golden, Colo.

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