

November 17, 1998

Mr. Eugene Hickok
Pennsylvania Secretary of Education
via fax: 717-787-7222

Dear Secretary Hickok:

Following up on my phone conversation with your assistant on Tuesday, I have more information regarding our public debate on school vouchers in Pittsburgh. The Allegheny Institute has indicated that it will seek to put David Kirkpatrick on the panel defending the affirmative side of the motion. Mr. Kirkpatrick was recently named to the post of Senior Fellow at the Allegheny Institute, and as you probably know, is head of the Reach School Choice Alliance. I have also sent along some more detailed information on our organization for your perusal. I certainly hope you can participate in this event, and would like to reiterate our belief that public dialogue on this most important issue could not come at a more crucial time.

Best Regards,

Gordon Mitchell,
Director of Debate
Assistant Professor

December 11, 1998

Mr. Eugene Hickok
Pennsylvania Secretary of Education
via fax: 717-787-7222

Dear Mr. Hickok:

We are continuing the planning process for a public debate on the topic of school vouchers, and want to thank you for giving the debate serious consideration last month. Although none of the initially proposed November dates for the debate ended up working out for all of our preferred outside advocates, we were very encouraged by the positive reaction we received from each of them. Therefore, we have decided to initiate a second round of planning efforts with the same advocates, hoping to find a mutually acceptable date in January or February of 1999, when it would be convenient for all the parties to gather in Pittsburgh for the event. In this letter, we provide the updated information on our preferred slate of invited advocates for this debate, as well as six proposed dates for your consideration.

Slate of invited advocates:

Affirmative (defending school vouchers)

- Mr. Eugene Hickok, PA State Secretary of Education
- Mr. Dave Kirkpatrick, Senior Fellow, Allegheny Institute
- Ms. Denise Olczak, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student

Negative (criticizing school vouchers)

- Dr. Renee Frazier, University of Pittsburgh Challenge for Excellence Programs
- Ms. Melissa A. Butler, Pittsburgh Public School teacher
- Ms. Bianca Huff, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student

Proposed dates:

- Tuesday, January 19, 1999, 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, January 20, 1999, 7:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, January 26, 1999, 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, January 27, 1999, 7:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 2, 1999, 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 2, 1999, 7:00 p.m.

All of the other details regarding this event remain unchanged from our previous invitation; we have added them to the text of this letter for your convenience.

In the past year, we've convened debates on timely topics such as electricity deregulation, civilian police review boards, sports stadiums finance, and climate change. Since our primary interest in organizing such debates is educational in nature, we take seriously our roles as even-handed, honest brokers committed to the principle of fair and equitable public exchange of viewpoints. Recognizing that forum interlocutors may have different preferences about formats, topics, and logistics, we routinely negotiate with participants during the planning stage to develop mutually satisfactory arrangements for the forum.

What follows is our initial proposal for logistics of the forum:

a) Participants (see above revised list)

b) Format. Moderated, three-on-three debate format with cross-examination by a panel of questioners.

- Moderator's introduction (10 minutes)
- First affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- First negative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Second affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Second negative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Third affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Third negative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Questions from the general audience (30 minutes)
- Closing arguments (3 minutes by each advocate, starting with the affirmative and alternating sides in sequence)

c) Topic. Could school vouchers improve the quality of education in Pennsylvania?

d) Date, room and time (see above for revised dates)

e) Media / transcript. Following the debate, a transcript of the debate will be generated by forum organizers. This transcript will be made available to interested parties.

Best Regards on behalf of the other members of the William Pitt Debating Union,

Gordon Mitchell,
Director of Debate

February 22, 1999

Mr. Eugene Hickok
Pennsylvania Secretary of Education
via fax: 717-787-7222

Dear Secretary Hickok:

I am writing to provide an update on our public debate scheduled for March 23 in Pittsburgh. Below is the latest summary of the logistical details for the event. We are still working to secure a commitment for a sixth advocate, but hope to finalize the slate of speakers this week. The Pennsylvania Cable Network plans to tape and broadcast the event, and our Office of Communications here at the University of Pittsburgh anticipates significant local media coverage. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Topic: Could school vouchers improve the quality of education in Pennsylvania?

Date & Time: March 23, 1999, 7:00 p.m.

Location: William Pitt Union, Assembly Room

Affirmative advocates (defending school vouchers)

- Mr. Eugene Hickok, PA State Secretary of Education
- Mr. Dave Kirkpatrick, Senior Fellow, Allegheny Institute
- Ms. Denise Olczak, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student

Negative advocates (criticizing school vouchers)

- Ms. Melissa A. Butler, Pittsburgh Public School teacher / PCPE
- Ms. Bianca Huff, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student
- Final advocate to be announced

Format: Moderated, three-on-three debate format with cross-examination by a panel of questioners.

- Moderator's introduction (10 minutes)
- First affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- First negative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Second affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Second negative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Third affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)

- Third negative opening argument (7 minutes)
- Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Questions from the general audience (30 minutes)
- Closing arguments (3 minutes by each advocate, starting with the affirmative and alternating sides in sequence)

Media / transcript: Following the debate, a transcript will be generated by forum organizers. This transcript will be made available to interested parties.

Thank you for supporting this event, and I will be sure to keep you apprised of additional logistical details as they develop.

Best Regards,

Gordon Mitchell,
Assistant Professor &
Director of Debate

March 17, 1999

Mr. Eugene Hickok
Pennsylvania Secretary of Education
via fax: 717-787-7222

Dear Secretary Hickok:

Thank you very much for agreeing to support our public debate on school vouchers by participating as a guest advocate. I am writing to provide the final logistical information on the debate. In response to several advocates' request for longer opening speech times, we have adjusted the format slightly:

PART I: Introduction & opening speeches

- Moderator's introduction (10 minutes)
- First affirmative opening argument (8 minutes)
 - Panel questions (3 minutes)
- First opposition opening argument (8 minutes)
 - Panel questions (3 minutes)
- Second affirmative opening argument (8 minutes)
 - Panel questions (3 minutes)
- Second opposition opening argument (8 minutes)
 - Panel questions (3 minutes)
- Third affirmative opening argument (8 minutes)
 - Panel questions (3 minutes)
- Third opposition opening argument (8 minutes)
 - Panel questions (3 minutes)

PART II: Audience questions (30 minutes)

PART III: Closing statements

- First affirmative closing statement (3 minutes)
- First opposition closing statement (3 minutes)
- Second affirmative closing statement (3 minutes)
- Second negative closing statement (3 minutes)
- Third affirmative closing statement (3 minutes)
- Third negative closing statement (3 minutes)

Traditionally, in debates such as this where undergraduate students are mixed with invited advocates, the students take the first position on each side. In this case, that would mean that Ms. Olczak would lead off the debate with the first affirmative opening argument, with Ms. Huff

following with the first negative opening argument. We can settle the speaking order for the remaining slots on Tuesday when we gather for the debate.

I am happy to report that media interest in the event is substantial. The Pennsylvania Cable Network plans to tape the debate and replay it multiple times on their channel. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* has committed to run a large piece that will contain clippings of the arguments presented in the debate in their March 28 Sunday Forum section. The University of Pittsburgh's Office of Communications has sent out press releases and will continue to coordinate with other media outlets throughout the week. On Tuesday, just prior to the debate, Trish White in the Office of Communications is organizing a **media availability session that will commence at 6:15 p.m.** in a room adjacent to the Assembly Room. This will provide members of the media an opportunity to ask questions directly to the advocates before the debate commences.

There will be several tables set up in the rear of the debating venue for you to set out research materials or other items to be picked up by members of the audience.

Finally, I am enclosing a copy of a campus map to help you find the debating venue. The William Pitt Union (circled on the map) is located on the corner of Bigelow Boulevard and Forbes Avenue. It is right across the street from the Cathedral of Learning, the large 36-story building that can be seen from miles away. The Assembly Room is the major event room in the Union, located just past the information desk near the main entrance.

Although I will be away at a debate tournament in Illinois from Thursday, March 18 to Monday, March 22, I will be checking the voicemail of my office phone (412-624-8531) daily for messages. Please call if you have questions or concerns. I will be back in the office beginning Tuesday morning, and I look forward to meeting you that evening at 6:15 p.m. for the media availability session.

Best Regards,

Gordon Mitchell,
Assistant Professor &
Director of Debate

cc: Trish White

June 2, 1999

Mr. Eugene Hickok
Pennsylvania Secretary of Education
Hand delivered

Dear Secretary Hickok:

Thank you very much for participating in our public debate on school vouchers this past March. Your contributions to the dialogue were much appreciated. Enclosed please find complimentary copies of the transcript and video recording of the debate, as well as a disk containing the text file for the transcript, in case you have an interest in posting such materials online or quoting sections verbatim. Because I am interested in compiling a full record of this event (including post-debate references, publications, etc.), I would be grateful if you would forward a copy of any such statements or publications from your office that refer to the debate.

Best Regards,

Gordon Mitchell,
Assistant Professor &
Director of Debate