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QuickPoint! – Educational Freedom: A Tale of Two Governors

By John A. Charles, Jr.

Last November, voters in Arkansas elected Republican Sarah Huckabee Sanders as their new Governor. Oregonians elected Democrat Tina Kotek.

On March 9, Gov. Huckabee Sanders signed the Arkansas LEARNS Act, her top legislative priority. The new law creates Educational Freedom Accounts for all K-12 students, to be phased in by 2026.

Individuals choosing a Freedom Account will get 90% of what public schools get per student in state funding from the previous school year, equal to \$6,600 for the current year. They can spend this money on private school tuition, textbooks, tutoring, and other approved educational expenses.

The new law also raises the minimum starting salaries for public school teachers from \$36,000 to \$50,000.

In Oregon, we have the dysfunctional government school monopoly. Students are assigned to brick buildings based on their ZIP Code. If families don't like the assigned schools, too bad; they don't get a refund.

Oregon public schools have lost 30,000 students since 2019. It's clear that families want other options, but legislators aren't listening.

It took Gov. Huckabee Sanders exactly 30 days to secure passage of the biggest school reform in Arkansas history. Gov. Kotek isn't even trying.

John A. Charles, Jr. is President and CEO of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

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