

Vouchers chip away at First Amendment

By Zachary Pearlman

For the past couple of years, Iowa’s governor Kim Reynolds has pushed for a school voucher bill, which has recently passed.

According to the governor’s office, in the Students First Act, parents of students will receive around \$7,598 of public funds per pupil to pay for tuition and other qualified expenses at a private school next school year.

“Universal eligibility will be phased in over three years,” the governor’s office stated. “All incoming Kindergarteners and all public-school students will be eligible beginning year one with the start of the 2023-2024 school year. Eligibility for families of children currently enrolled in accredited private schools will be income based

Green Out

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the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, California, because a floragraph of Emily appeared on the Donate Life float.

Mrs. Bohnsack shared some of her experience of the Rose Bowl at Green Out night, but she felt the event is more so about continuing to wear green and everybody partaking in the event.

Emily was one of two Iowa girls chosen for the Rose Bowl Parade. The guest speaker at Green Out this year was Mrs. Jeanine Schwarte Flies from Norwalk. Her daughter Amanda was the second girl chosen.

“I believe that when the Iowa Donor Network nominated our two families, I think they knew that our two families would just hit it off,” Mrs. Bohnsack said.

The Bohnsack family is still in contact with Amanda’s family.

“We just clicked right away,” said Mrs. Bohnsack. “I think it’s very powerful to have the same club, sadly, so we can relate to each other.”

Mrs. Bohnsack said that the two families both lean on each other for support and can relate to what each other is going through.

“It’s been nice to have that someone that gets it.”

Mrs. Bohnsack says that this is

over the first two years.”

Governor Reynolds believes the Students First Act will create an open and fair system for families. However, she is overstepping one of America’s core values—the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

The Establishment Clause prohibits our government bodies from endorsing any religious institution.

According to the Iowa Department of Education, there are 183 non-public schools. Of these, only a handful are not affiliated with a branch of the Christian faith.

By passing this bill, the state of Iowa is promoting the Christian faith by default.

Separation of church and state is an integral part of America. One could even say

definitely the best year of raising money for the Iowa Donor Network.

“I just thought it was so neat because Tipton [Durant’s basketball opponent] was embracing it too,” Mrs. Bohnsack said. “They were helping with the bids and partaking in the half-court shots.”

When Amanda’s mom spoke, she said that it felt like one big hug in the gym, and Mrs. Bohnsack agreed.

“I am just amazed and honored that they [area residents] continue to embrace this organ donation,” said Mrs. Bohnsack. “It’s not just about Emily anymore.”

Although the Green Out event started with Emily, it is constantly expanding and touching more people’s lives.

“We have a lot of community members in our area that are waiting, have donated, or receiving,” she said.

The first Green Out event featured a basketball game against Wilton High School, and Mrs. Bohnsack wanted to have that be the tradition.

But after getting started, she realized that the whole point was to spread awareness, so the Durant teams started to play the Green Out games against other schools to touch more people.

Every year, the senior basketball players read facts about organ donation, and

the nation was founded with this principle.

“They [pilgrims] were looking for some religious freedom,” said Mr. Daniel Knipfel, one of Durant’s Social Studies teachers. He said the pilgrims were escaping from the Church of England during the early seventeenth century.

Despite this fundamental overstepping by the Iowa government, the United States Supreme Court will not take action against it.

Over the summer of 2022, in the court case of Carson v. Makin, the state of Maine instituted a similar bill to the one in Iowa; however, Maine explicitly stated no taxpayer dollars would fund religious schools.

Yet the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Maine “must fund religious activity as

this year the Tipton players also took part.

Mrs. Bohnsack loves this because she wants to get as many kids involved to feel how meaningful organ donation really is.

Along with Green Out, Durant senior Nolan DeLong had his football jersey retired moments before, and Mrs. Bohnsack felt a special connection between Nolan’s jersey retirement and the Green Out game.

“It was two amazing things getting recognized that night because that’s not going to happen too often, and not many people will get their jersey retired,” she said.

“I know they [Nolan’s family] were kind of worried about that, but I just thought it was just perfect and magical.”

Durant’s high school principal and head football coach Mr. Joel Diederichs presented DeLong with his jersey.

He got the idea because of “all of the different accomplishments Nolan has had on the football field here at Durant.”

“We [administrators] talked about it, and we made the decision that he was deserving of it,” said Mr. Diederichs, “and he definitely is.”

DeLong’s jersey will stay in the commons until it is fully remodeled, and then Mr. Diederichs will find a new place to display the jersey.

part of an educational aid program,” according to an article from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

While the U.S. Supreme Court wants to blur the lines on separation of church and state, doing so will dig us deep into the past.

This action overrules our nation’s integral views on the First Amendment and the freedom to choose our own religion.

We separate church and state to keep our First Amendment strong, and removing it would be a grave mistake.

One could even say the voucher bill is creating steps towards a theocracy, a system of religious government.

With the Students First Act passing, Iowa has set its core religion on Christianity whether intended or not.



Senior Ashley Shelangoski (center) reads a card about organ donation during the Green Out event.

Mr. Diederichs felt that keeping the secret from DeLong was fun.

Mr. Diederichs told Nolan’s parents at the end of the football season about his plans to retire his jersey. He then had to find a company that would display it.

“Once we found the place, it was easy because then we kept it out of the building,” Mr. Diederichs said.

Once he got the jersey back, Mr. Diederichs allowed the family to see it.

“I’m impressed they kept the secret from him,” he said.

The jersey in the case is the new replacement that would’ve been used for the next season, so DeLong got to keep the jersey that he wore every Friday night for the past four years.

Vouchers

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He said the majority of families



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benefiting from the Student First Act are those with students currently attending private schools because they would pay \$7,500 less.

However, Rep. Kaufmann said the bill was only designed to make private education more affordable.

“The goal of this legislation wasn’t to make private school free; it was to make it more affordable,” he said.

“Regina is more on the higher end of expense. There are definitely scores of private schools across the state that aren’t nearly as expensive.”

He also said students who are in educational settings that are not suitable to

their learning style can choose to attend private schools.

On top of Mr. Burnett’s distaste for the voucher bill, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is concerned about a private school’s ability to discriminate against students.

“Our concern is that they are taking public school money and giving it to schools that have the option to discriminate; not all schools do, but a lot do,” said Veronica Lorton Fowler, the communications director of the ACLU of Iowa.



“They do not have the same guard rails, they don’t have to comply to the same laws about bullying, harassment, hate



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Heick

Junior Ian Heick joined robotics because of his passion for creating things. This year, Heick is credited with creating a robot’s entire code by himself. The team members build a robot from scratch, then add new additions after each meet until they’re satisfied with the robot’s performance.


speech, gender equity, LGBTQ students, that public schools do.”

Rep. Kaufmann believes the differences between private and public schools are not as stark as opponents of the voucher bill make them out to be.

“It is not like they are apples to oranges; there are definitely overlapping similarities such as being accredited,” he said. “They have to be credentialed by the Department of Education the same way Durant has credentials.”

Rep. Kaufmann said private schools are not required to accept all students, but some private schools are planning to be more inclusive.

“I have received some commitments from schools to be a lot more inclusive, including for the disabled,” he said. “I can tell you right now, if they don’t follow through with their word, I’ll be back to change it.”



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