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## **Ray Flynn Backs Repeal of Anti-Aid Amendments**

*Former Vatican ambassador, Boston mayor calls on state leaders to expand educational opportunity, support Catholic education*

**BOSTON** – Former Ambassador to the Vatican and Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn called on state leaders to exercise political courage and leadership by providing educational opportunity for more needy children in [a transcript published today by Pioneer Institute](#).

“Few issues are more central to the American Dream of opportunity for all than giving poor and working class kids the chance to get an education,” Flynn said in remarks delivered at a March forum held in Boston.

Flynn focused the bulk of his remarks on Catholic schools and called for lawmakers to repeal to so-called anti-aid amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution. The amendments, a relic of mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century anti-Catholic bigotry, eliminate high-quality Catholic education as an option for many needy families by prohibiting state funds from being directed to sectarian schools. Michigan is the only other state with such a restrictive provision.

“Nobody in their right mind would ever dream of denying a college student a state or federal grant, scholarship or loan to attend... Holy Cross, Boston College, Notre Dame or Brandeis,” Flynn said. “[W]hy would we tolerate this in our K-12 system?”

The former mayor and ambassador noted that Catholic schools have held fast to their mission of providing an education to the neediest students. Archdiocese of Boston schools top Boston, Massachusetts, and national averages in terms of SAT scores, graduation rates and percentage of graduates enrolling in college. Archdiocesan schools outperform state averages even though Massachusetts students are the nation’s best performers.

The schools also reflect Massachusetts’ demographic makeup. The percentage of Hispanic students in Catholic schools is on the rise and the majority of Boston African-American students who don’t attend public schools choose parochial schools. Nearly 20 percent of students enrolled in archdiocesan schools are not Catholic.

Catholic schools accomplish all this on a shoestring. The average Massachusetts Catholic school spends about \$6,000 per student annually; Boston’s annual per-pupil cost is about \$14,000.

But as in public schools, Catholic school enrollment is falling in Massachusetts. In 1942, there were 225 parish schools in Boston alone; today, there are 124 in the entire Archdiocese.

The decline is not because parents are displeased with Catholic education, but for financial reasons. Repeal of the anti-aid amendments would provide financial relief for the schools and opportunity for needy families.

One reason for the financial problems is that Catholic education long relied on highly qualified priests and nuns to staff schools. Flynn noted that in 1960, nearly three-quarters of school staff was religious; today the number is less than 4 percent.

Flynn also endorsed other choice options that expand educational opportunity, including successful tax credit programs in Rhode Island and Florida. Under these, funds to pay private school tuition come from credits granted to corporate and/or individual donors, not a line item in the state budget. Non-profit organizations award the money to families, who then direct it to the school of their choice.

Other educational options Flynn discussed included charter public schools and regional vocational-technical schools.

In recent years, Pioneer has published several pieces of research on this topic: [“School Choice Without Vouchers: Expanding Education options through Tax Credits”](#) (October 2007); [“Education Tax Credits: A Review of the Rhode Island Program and Assessment of Possibilities in Massachusetts”](#) (October 2010); and, [“The Know-Nothing Amendments: Barriers to School Choice in Massachusetts”](#) (April 2009).

Pioneer op-eds on the Know-Nothing Amendments and tax credit programs have appeared in the *Boston Herald* ([“Promoting school choice a no-brainer,”](#) May 16, 2011, [“Tax credit Key to Broader School Choice,”](#) November 17, 2010, and [“Bigotry Impedes School Choice,”](#) March 17, 2010), *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* ([“Time for Education Tax Credits,”](#) March 16, 2011, [“Expanding Opportunity,”](#) December 8, 2010), *Lowell Sun* ([“Halting Bigotry against Mass. Catholic Schools,”](#) March 17, 2011 and [“An education in tax-credit program for Massachusetts,”](#) December 13, 2010), *Fall River Herald News* ([“Know-Nothing amendments a relic of anti-Irish-Catholic bigotry,”](#) March 16, 2011), *Providence Journal* ([“Mass. Should help poor children attend better schools,”](#) December 19, 2010), and the *Patriot Ledger* ([“It’s time for another look at education tax credits,”](#) December 22, 2010).

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