



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
June 27, 2002

**CONTACT:** John Kramer  
Lisa Andaloro  
(202) 955-1300

## Victory for School Choice

**Washington, D.C.**—Today, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its most important educational decision since *Brown v. Board of Education*, upholding the constitutionality of Cleveland's school choice program. **A comprehensive school choice media kit is available at [www.ij.org](http://www.ij.org).** The Institute for Justice and its clients issued the following statements:

### **Clint Bolick**

"This was the Super Bowl for school choice and the kids won," said Clint Bolick, vice president for the Institute for Justice.

"This decision makes good on the promise made nearly 50 years ago in *Brown v. Board of Education*," said Clint Bolick, vice president with the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Justice, the nation's leading legal advocate for school choice. The Institute for Justice represents low-income parents from Cleveland receiving scholarships from the program. "It marks a new beginning for children all across America who desperately need educational opportunities. Those who were once educationally disenfranchised and forgotten have just gained a voice that the educational establishment can no longer afford to ignore. Poor parents will finally have a choice in how and where their children are educated. This can only mean good things for them, for their children and ultimately for our country's K-12 public and private schools," Bolick said.

Bolick declared, "This is the day of sunshine we've battled for over the past 10 years. The constitutional cloud over school choice is finally lifted."

Addressing what happens next, Bolick concluded, "This decision removes a major impediment to school choice legislation around the nation. We expect to see major legislative efforts at the federal and state levels over the coming year. At least half a dozen states, including Colorado and Texas, should see significant action after the November elections."

### **Chip Mellor**

Chip Mellor, president and general counsel of the Institute for Justice, said, "This is the culmination of a decade-long civil rights struggle between the civil rights establishment—led by the NAACP and the ACLU who fought parental choice in education—and the new civil rights leaders—organizations like the Institute for Justice and the Black Alliance for Educational Options who see expanded choice as a vehicle for vindicating civil rights of the poor and disenfranchised. Today's decision will point the way to dramatic opportunities over the next decade."

### **Richard Komer**

Richard Komer, a senior attorney with the Institute for Justice, said, "This is a great day for liberty and equality! The Supreme Court has ruled that states can let inner-city kids trapped in abominable public schools escape to better schools. State legislatures are now free to experiment with innovative programs that introduce competition into the rigid and failing school systems in our biggest cities."

Komer continued, "Today the Supreme Court ruled that it is OK for the states to throw an educational lifeline to students trapped in failing public schools. The Cleveland City public schools have become a travesty, and today's action says that innovative efforts to inject a greater degree of competition into the system are constitutional."

Komer concluded, "Today the U.S. Supreme Court rejected arguments made by America's two largest teachers' unions that parents cannot be empowered to make choices about where to educate their children if they are permitted to choose private religious schools among others. Rejecting the unions' characterization of the role of the parents as merely 'ritualistic,' the Court affirmed that the parents' unfettered choice is an essential component in finding the program constitutional."

—More—

**Clark Neily**

Clark Neily, a senior attorney with the Institute for Justice, said, “Today’s decision destroys the myth of one-size-fits-all public education. People who could afford it have been exercising school choice for years by moving to suburbs with good public schools or sending their children to private schools. Now those same kinds of choices will be available to all parents, regardless of wealth.”

**Robert Freedman**

Robert Freedman, an attorney with the Institute for Justice, said, “Today the Supreme Court gave the parents and people of Cleveland freedom—freedom from the despair of sending their children to wretched schools, freedom from sleepless nights spent worrying about their child’s safety at school, freedom to attend to the best school possible, and, finally, freedom for every child to discover and develop their own talents at the school of their choice.”

**Roberta Kitchen (Cleveland school choice mom)**

“Now I have the same opportunity to choose a good school for my child that wealthier parents have had for years because they could afford to buy a home where there are better schools,” said Roberta Kitchen, a school choice mom from Cleveland, who attended the argument and spoke at the national rally in front of the Supreme Court on the day of the argument. “Now we have a real chance to close the gap between the quality of education that poor and rich children receive.”

Kitchen said, “School choice means that my children will no longer be ignored or taken for granted. If my children aren’t getting the education they need, we have the power to choose something better. We can now vote with our feet.”

**Christine Suma (Cleveland school choice mom)**

“School choice has worked for my children and I think it will work for many more children across the country as new programs are started and new schools are opened,” said Christine Suma, a school choice mom from Cleveland, who is a litigant in this case represented by the Institute for Justice. “This is a day of celebration for every parent who wants his or her child to get a good education, but has never had the money. It is a chance to use their tax dollars in the school of their choice.”

Suma said, “Now that the Court has given a green light to school choice, I hope lawmakers will give parents in other states the same choices that make such a difference for our children.”

Suma said, “As I stood at the school choice rally, I looked up the steps to the Supreme Court and saw ‘Equal Justice Under the Law.’ That’s all I want for my children. I want the field to be leveled so that all children can receive funding for the school of their choice. The Court today gave me and so many other parents equal justice we have never enjoyed before.”

Suma concluded, “When the school choice program began with the Cleveland scholarship program, and I received spots for my children, I thought, ‘That’s the best lottery I ever won.’ Today, parents across the nation have won the same lottery.”

###

[NOTE: To arrange **interviews** on this subject, journalists may call John Kramer, the Institute for Justice’s vice president for communications, at (202) 955-1300 or in the evening/weekend at (703) 527-8730.

For an **on-line media kit offering one-stop shopping on school choice**, please visit [www.ij.org](http://www.ij.org) and then go to our Media Center.]