

“Education is about creating opportunity for all our children, not about leaving many behind.”

SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN (D-MA)

THE ISSUE: On Nov. 2, the long-awaited Republican tax overhaul bill was released in the House of Representatives. Through a provision in the new tax plan, school-choice advocates could gain access to a tax-free savings plan to be used for private school tuition. The bill would allow 529 savings plans to be used for elementary and high school expenses such as tuition.

Extending 529 savings plans to elementary and high schools in addition to college is a win for school-choice advocates. Thus the subject of charter schools is up for debate.

Charter schools are publicly funded (through tax dollars) but privately managed schools operating under a “charter” or contract with the state or community. These charter schools are subject to fewer rules, regulations, and statutes than traditional public schools, but they typically receive less public funding than public schools.

Some charter schools are operated by for-profit companies while others are paid for with a mix of public and private funding. There is no charge to attend a charter school. However, space is often extremely limited.

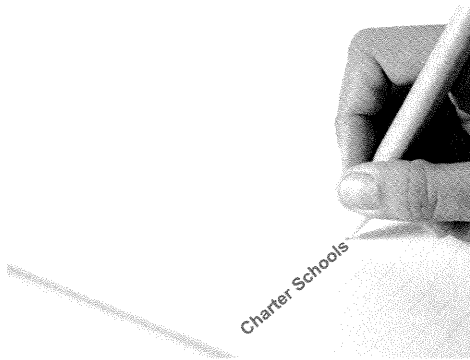
Charter schools have more freedom than traditional public schools, which must follow state rules on what they can teach, and how students are evaluated and tested. Students attend charters by choice rather than being assigned to a public school.

THE CONTROVERSY: Public-school advocates assert that charter schools compete with public schools, and that’s not fair because charter schools don’t have to follow as many rules. They say the “school choice” movement is an effort to privatize education and attack teachers’ unions.

Proponents of charter schools say that because charter schools have more flexibility, this leads to greater innovation in teaching. “It is time to make education great again in this country,” Secretary DeVos said. “This means expanding choices and options to give every child the opportunity for a quality education, regardless of their zip code or their family circumstances.”

THOSE FOR funding charter schools with tax dollars say that they provide more choices for parents and their children. Also, competition among schools encourages creativity and causes schools to try harder to excel. Charter schools like Harlem Children’s Zone and the KIPP network are known for developing innovative new ways to teach and finding ways to improve education.

THOSE AGAINST using taxpayers’ money to fund charter schools say that having charters leads to less funding for the traditional public schools. Also, charters are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Since charter schools can decide what type of student they want to accept, not all students have an opportunity to attend.



IN 2016-2017, there are more than 6,900 charter schools, enrolling an estimated 3.1 million students, according to a report by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Over the past 10 years, enrollment in charter schools has nearly tripled — from 1.2 million students in 2006-2007 to an estimated 3.1 million today. Between fall 2015 and fall 2016, charter school enrollment increased by 7 percent.

“We have to quit passing the bill to the next generation.”

REP. JOE BARTON
(R-TX)

THE ISSUE: In December, Congress will have to decide what to do about the debt ceiling — once again. The question is, should we raise or eliminate the debt ceiling?

The debt ceiling, also called the debt limit, is a limit on the amount of national debt that may be issued by the U.S. Treasury after it has spent and incurred that debt. The debt ceiling limits how much money the federal government can borrow to pay its own bills.

Generally, Republicans believe the debt ceiling shouldn't be raised. Instead, the country's debt should be reduced by overhauling costly safety-net programs such as Social Security and Medicare. Conversely, Democrats typically believe the debt ceiling should be raised or eliminated altogether. They say the debt ceiling has led to declines in stock prices and a downgrade in the U.S. credit rating.

THE CONTROVERSY: Congress has voted to suspend or raise the debt ceiling multiple times and almost always at the very last minute. From Oct. 1 to 16, 2013, the U.S. government shut down because of a stalemate between Democrats and Republicans. The two parties couldn't reach an agreement to either appropriate funds or pass a continuing resolution to temporarily keep the government running.

Soon, the time will come for Congress to either increase the legal borrowing limit, suspend

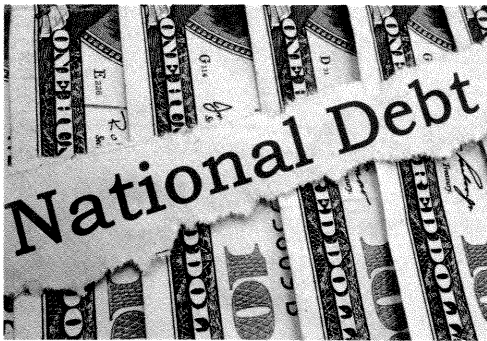
the ceiling for some period again or eliminate the debt ceiling all together.

Many Republicans have said they'd like to see the country's debt reduced by overhauling expensive federal safety-net programs. Also, repeatedly raising the debt ceiling defeats its purpose. We can't keep kicking the can down the road.

Yet many Democrat legislators believe the debt ceiling needs to be raised or eliminated. Rep. Brendan F. Boyle (D-PA) recently introduced legislation to eliminate the U.S. debt ceiling, which would mean that Congress wouldn't set a cap on the amount of money the government borrows to pay its bills.

THOSE FOR raising the debt ceiling or eliminating it all together argue that failing to do so would cripple the economy and force the U.S. to default on its loans and financial obligations. The debt ceiling has never worked and is a counterproductive means of slowing down spending.

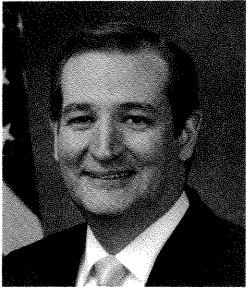
THOSE AGAINST raising or eliminating the debt ceiling say the government should look at cutting federal programs instead of raising the cap or eliminating that safeguard. Putting the country into further debt is not the answer and we need to look at long-term effects this will have on future generations. Each time the debt ceiling is raised, the current debt is just being pushed off for future generations to pay.



THE TOTAL U.S. NATIONAL DEBT is currently around \$19.8 trillion, an amount that currently exceeds the United States' gross domestic product (GDP). This means that the U.S. spends more money than it makes. According to a June 2017 report by the Congressional Budget Office, over the next decade (from 2017 to 2027), outlays are projected to grow more quickly than revenues in the U.S.

Issue 1 Charter Schools

Should charter schools be funded with tax dollars?

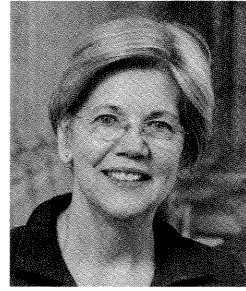


YES: SEN. TED CRUZ (R-TX)
@SenTedCruz



“School choice continues to be the civil rights issue of our era. Each and every child has the right to access a quality education. Not only

does school choice give low-income children the same choices and opportunities that children from wealthy families have always had, it also improves the public schools, making them stronger and more effective. This legislation [the Educational Freedom Accounts Act or S. 2455] ensures that every child in Washington, D.C., regardless of race, ethnicity, or zip code, has the same opportunity to choose the school that best fits their needs and will help them achieve their very best.”



NO: SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN (D-MA)
@SenWarren

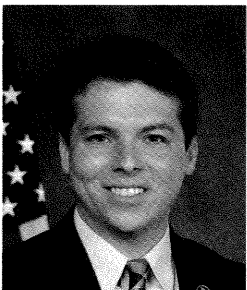


“Many charter schools in Massachusetts are producing extraordinary results for our students, and we should celebrate the hard work of

those teachers and spread what’s working to other schools. But I am very concerned about what this specific proposal [to raise Massachusetts’ cap on charter schools] means for hundreds of thousands of children across our Commonwealth, especially those living in districts with tight budgets where every dime matters. Education is about creating opportunity for all our children, not about leaving many behind.”

Issue 2 Debt Ceiling

Should Congress raise or eliminate the debt ceiling?

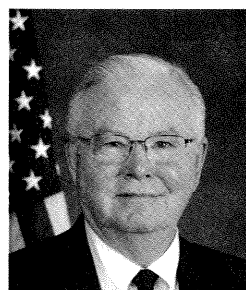


YES: REP. BRENDAN BOYLE (D-PA)
@RepBrendanBoyle



“The debt ceiling, and the constant crisis it creates through repeated threats of government shutdown, is unnecessary and problematic

to say the least. It’s no wonder that only a handful of countries around the world currently follow this disruptive, arbitrary and restrictive fiscal practice. When you receive your credit card statement at the end of the month, you can’t decide ‘I’ll pay this, but won’t pay that.’ Our current process of ‘governing by deadline’ and playing chicken with the debt ceiling is essentially doing just that – and risking the full faith and credit of the United States. This is reckless and irresponsible.”



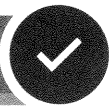
NO: REP. JOE BARTON (R-TX)
@RepJoeBarton



“When the hurricane relief-debt ceiling increase bill came back from the Senate, I voted no. I am not against voting for relief programs to help

hurricane victims, but I am against raising the public debt ceiling without a plan to reduce deficits in the short term, and eliminate them in the long term. The money we vote to spend today will have to be paid back by our children and grandchildren. We have yet again missed an opportunity for substantial reforms and reduced spending. Until we seriously address entitlement reform, we will have the same dilemma in a year that we face today. We have to quit passing the bill to the next generation.”

Vote



Students: Please give this ballot to your teacher to send to your lawmakers in Congress.

Dear _____

I am a student receiving information from the Student Governmental Affairs Program. Here are my opinions on these issues. I would greatly appreciate any response you might like to share.

1) Should charter schools be funded with tax dollars?

Yes No Undecided

Comments: _____

2) Should Congress raise or eliminate the debt ceiling?

Yes No Undecided

Comments: _____

Student Name

School Name

School Address