

Republican Free Enterprise Schizophrenia

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In the last Texas legislative session, two school choice bills passed the Senate, but were not considered by the House Education Committee. House Speaker Joe Strauss appointed House Education Committee Chair Jimmie Don Aycock and could have forced him to schedule hearings and votes on the Senate-passed school choice bills, but did not. [Supposedly](#), grocery-store billionaire Howard Butt was instrumental in the failure to have those bills considered. So much for school choice opponents' repeated assertion that public schools should keep their public finance monopoly because schooling policymaking 'must be democratic'. There was nothing 'democratic' about the Texas House's treatment of school choice proposals.

So, we see, again that some Republicans do not believe their party's rhetoric about the importance, virtue, and power of free enterprise; properly constrained by competition and laws against fraud and discrimination. And despite the persistently awful performance of school systems across America, those Republican free enterprise skeptics at least believe that accountability through their [sausage factory](#) is yielding better results for schoolchildren than an alternate system wherein education entrepreneurs can compete to provide schooling alternatives for children that are not a good fit for the public school system's attempt at one-size-fits-all. We need to demand that they explain that bizarre, devastating schizophrenia.

Mr. Butt's opposition to school choice expansion, including financial support for those Republicans, is especially incredible. He runs an awesome grocery store chain. Except for Wal-Mart and Whole Foods, other grocery store chains cannot compete in San Antonio. Kroger, Albertsons, and Handy Andy couldn't survive here. It remains to be seen if San Antonio

newcomer, Trader Joe's, will be competitive in San Antonio. Because I like shopping at his stores, it pains me to realize that my grocery purchases are helping to finance opposition to school choice proposals, and thus leaving children behind.

We need several Howard Butt clones to run private school franchises. Mr. Butt understands that incentives matter. His employees are always friendly, efficient, and seem happy. He understands the need for specialization; see, for example, the so-called 'GucciBs'. No store can serve all of the public's diverse wants. I'm sure Mr. Butt fervently believes that unleashing free enterprise in the provision of schooling options would hurt children. But why? He is a billionaire because of outstanding service to his customers. He has not earned his billions at the expense of his customers. Why wouldn't education entrepreneurs pursue that formula for success in developing the diverse schooling options needed by the children failing to learn in assigned, traditional public schools? Parents will shop for schooling even more carefully than they shop for groceries.