

EDITORIALS DECEMBER 1, 2015

# Charter school clarification is welcome

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Lawmakers have clearer path

Local-control ruling dropped

Private funding still available

*The Olympian Editorial Board*

The rhetoric had gotten a bit hot over a state Supreme Court ruling in early September that appeared to invalidate Washington's still young experiment with charter schools.

The court issued its split ruling just as the school year was beginning, and one right-leaning group made a shameful effort to blame the unpopular ruling to campaign contributions from teacher unions to several justices.

Advocates for charters petitioned the court to reconsider its ruling, which the justices refused to do last week. But the effort was worth it because it produced some clarity.

The court issued an order that opens a path that should be easier for state legislators to follow as they move to protect charter schools as an option to improve student learning. In a nutshell, the court dropped a footnote of its original ruling that dealt with the need for schools to be under local school board control.

That local-control question is important because the publicly funded charters operate independently of school districts and have their own state-approved charters.

Dropping that allows an easier legislative solution, which is to fund charters in a way that is segregated from the state's funding of its common school system, according to Republican Sen. Joe Fain of Auburn.

"It provides a very clear and extraordinarily simple path toward fixing the glitch," Fain said. "I'm very confident the votes are there in the House and Senate to address this issue."

The court's last-minute ruling had thrown doubt over the viability of charter schools at the worst possible moment. But advocates for schools were able to secure pledges of private dollars to keep the schools open in 2015-16 if state funding became unavailable.

Fain has been working on ways to ensure the state's nine charter schools can stay in business. We're confident he and other lawmakers will get that done.

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