

[seattlepi.com http://www.seattlepi.com/local/politics/article/Charter-school-backers-aim-TV-blitz-at-the-6850412.php](http://www.seattlepi.com/local/politics/article/Charter-school-backers-aim-TV-blitz-at-the-6850412.php)

Charter school backers aim 11th-hour TV blitz at the Legislature

BY JOEL CONNELLY, SEATTLEPI.COM STAFF Updated 10:06 am, Wednesday, February 24, 2016



Hundreds of students rally at Summit Sierra public charter school in Seattle's International District. Charter school students, parents and staff rallied to support the schools and to call for the Legislature to rescue their funding. (Joshua Trujillo, seattlepi.com) [less](#)

Supporters of Washington's nine charter schools are taking to the airwaves with a "six figure" TV ad buy, hoping to prod the Legislature to find money for the publicly financed but privately run schools.

The 11th-hour appeal -- featuring students asking "Are you with us?" -- is being mounted with just over two weeks left in this year's legislative session.

A bill to rescue charter schools passed the Republican-run state Senate, with bipartisan backing, last month. But it faces a greater hurdle in the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives.

In a ruling announced the Friday before Labor Day 2015, the state Supreme Court threw out the funding mechanism of a charter school initiative that was narrowly passed by voters in 2012.

The decision, which the court has refused to reconsider, put in limbo the academic future of 1,100 students in schools who were already weeks into their academic year.

The Senate responded with a solution that would fund charter schools out of Washington lottery money, rather than dollars feeding the state's general fund. The Supreme Court ruled that under the state constitution, general fund revenue must go to "common schools," defined as public schools with elected school boards.

Charter school advocates have since bused hundreds of students and teachers to lobby in Olympia. They have formed an alliance with such groups as Washington Education Voters in an umbrella group called Act Now for Washington Students.

They have put TV spots on the air during National Football League playoff games.

Washington Charters Action, a political action committee, has \$252,880 in its war chest, according to filings with the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission.

The pro-charter lobby is pitted against the Washington Education Association, which has argued that charter schools threaten to drain public school resources at a time when the Legislature is struggling under court order to fully fund K-12 education.

The 2012 initiative authorized creation of as many as 40 charter schools across the state.

At present, 43 states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation authorizing charter schools.

The issue has split the Democratic Party.

Charter schools have won support from President Obama, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and such legislators as state Sen. Mark Mullet, D-Issaquah, and Eric Pettigrew, D-Seattle.

But Gov. Jay Inslee has supported the Supreme Court ruling, saying the Legislature's attention should go to full funding of K-12.

(Editor's note: A family member of this writer attends a charter school.)

© 2016 Hearst Communications, Inc.

H E A R S T