

Saint Theresa Parish

A Roman Catholic Community

11 August 2009

Editorial Staff

The Arizona Republic

200 East Van Buren Street

Phoenix, AZ 85004

To the Editors:

It was with interest that I have read a variety of negative opinions regarding the Arizona Tuition Tax Credit printed in recent editions of the *Arizona Republic*. A recurring theme of the articles and letters seems to be that those who choose to designate a portion of their tax dollars to non-public education (and the schools that accept those designated dollars) are somehow complicit in depleting public school funds. I also noted in the August 9th edition of your newspaper that the public school funding in Arizona in 2006 for K-12 students was \$6472.00 per student. Presumably – and rightfully – this per student figure would be substantially greater today than it was in 2006.

I am affiliated with a pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8 Catholic School, with an enrollment of approximately 570 students in Kindergarten through eighth grade. If my calculations are correct, using the 2006 per student funding figure of \$6472 quoted by your paper, our school saves the State of Arizona in excess of \$3.6 million per year.

It is true that some of our students would not have the financial resources to attend our school without the partial tuition assistance they receive from Arizona Tuition Tax Credit funds. Yet in any consideration of tuition tax credits, I think it vitally important to understand the reality that schools like ours are providing the students of Arizona an effective, high-quality education... while at the same time rendering considerable assistance to the state budget. If we closed our doors tomorrow, where would our students go? I don't believe that the local public school, much less the state budget, would be able to accommodate an additional 570 students suddenly showing up on their doorstep. This past school year, there were 23,137 students attending Catholic elementary and high schools in our state... which means Arizona Catholic schools saved the State of Arizona approximately \$15 million in just one year (calculated on Arizona's

5045 East Thomas Road - Phoenix, Arizona 85018

telephone 602.840.0850

www.sttheresaphx.org

2006 per student funding level). And that estimated savings to the state budget only accounts for students attending Catholic schools, not the other non-public schools. If every private, religious and parochial school in Arizona were to close, it would be hard to imagine the consequences for the state, its budget and its public school system. It should also be remembered that families of students in non-public schools pay their state taxes – so they are contributing to the funding of public schools, even though their children do not attend the public school.

Thank you for taking into consideration these important factors in any discussion about the Arizona Tuition Tax Credit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Kieffer".

Rev. Charles G. Kieffer, V.F.
Pastor