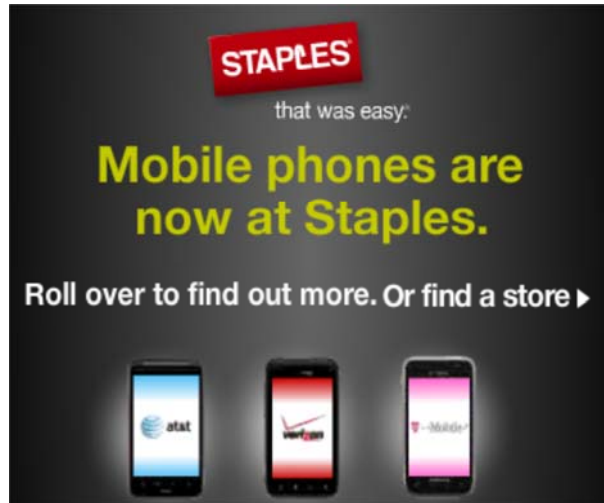


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[Back to previous page](#)



Boehner backs vouchers for D.C. schoolchildren

By Mike DeBonis and Ben Pershing, Published: January 24, 2011

House Speaker John Boehner will introduce a bill Wednesday that aims to revive a school voucher program in the District, nearly two years after Democratic opposition to the program led to its phaseout.

Boehner (R-Ohio) is set to unveil the bill one day after President Barack Obama is expected to call for greater political comity in his State of the Union address. Boehner is presenting the bill as an opportunity for bipartisanship.

"If the president is sincere about working together on education reform, we should start by saving this successful, bipartisan program that has helped so many underprivileged children get a quality education," the speaker said in a statement.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.), a longtime voucher supporter, is expected to introduce a companion bill in the upper chamber and join Boehner at a Wednesday press event.

Democrats pushed successfully in the previous Congress to prevent re-authorization of the program, which provides up to \$7,500 yearly toward tuition in private schools, including religious schools. As a compromise, legislators approved an Obama proposal to allow about 1,700 children then currently receiving vouchers to [continue getting them through high school](#). But no new students have were admitted to the program for the 2009 and 2010 school years.

Mayor Vincent C. Gray (D) is an outspoken supporter of the city's popular charter schools, which are favored by many of the "school choice" advocates who support vouchers. But Gray has long opposed

vouchers as an improper congressional foray into local affairs, and he reiterated that opposition Monday evening.

"These are decisions that should be made by the residents of the District of Columbia," Gray said in a statement.

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