

Nev. school choice case pits GOP law against GOP law

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Call it an ironic political twist of fate.

A constitutional amendment spearheaded more than a decade ago by a conservative Republican to take politics out of Nevada education funding is now at the heart of a legal battle that could upend a conservative GOP ideal – public funding for school choice.

The Education First Initiative was launched by then-Rep. Jim Gibbons, R-Nev., and Dawn Gibbons, his wife and state assemblywoman at the time, following the debacle of the 2003 Legislature and epic fight over school funding.

Passed overwhelmingly by voters in 2004 and 2006, the amendment requires the state Legislature to fund K-12 public education before any other part of the state budget.

Fast forward 10 years to this month: Carson City District Judge James Wilson cited a key provision of that amendment when he issued an injunction temporarily blocking Nevada's new education savings accounts intended to allow parents to use state money to pay for tuition at private or religious schools.

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