



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND SOCIETY
BERKELEY LAW

CSLS SPEAKER SERIES

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“To Liberate From the Accident of Family Wealth: How Liberals Revived and Revised the Case for School Vouchers in the 1960s and 1970s and Paved the Way to *Zelman*”

Vouchers are exhibit number one in contemporary discussions of “neoliberalism at work” in K-12 education. From this perspective, a straight historical line connects Milton Friedman to Ronald Reagan to the United States Supreme Court’s pro-voucher ruling in *Zelman* in 2002, which Erwin Chemerinsky described in 2004 as a “triumph of conservative ideology.” Yet, despite popular and scholarly connotations of vouchers with conservatism, vouchers receive little, if any, attention in leading histories of the rise of the right in the post-World War II United States, which focus instead on a host of other educational issues as animating conservatives in the quarter century or so after Friedman’s seminal 1955 essay, “The Role of Government in Education.” This is not to say that vouchers vanished from the “mainstream,” as leading educational historian and voucher critic Diane Ravitch claims, waiting the day when Reagan would revive and popularize Friedman’s 1955 defense of them. Rather, the case for vouchers would take an ideological turn to the left during the 1960s and 1970s. This talk will explore that left turn, focusing on the role of a couple of Berkeley law professors – Jack Coons and Steve Sugarman – in engineering it alongside, and inextricably bound to, their much better-known efforts on behalf of school finance reform.

PLACE Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Avenue
TIME 12:45 – 2:00pm
INFO <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/>
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