Congresswoman Luz Rivas Visits St. Genevieve as Students Advocate for Education Freedom Tax Credit, EFTC

Leadership and Advocacy students brief the congresswoman on the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit and their campaign urging California to opt in.

PANORAMA CITY, CA, UNITED STATES, August 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Congresswoman Luz Rivas (CA-29) visited St. Genevieve Parish Schools on Monday, August 10, meeting with student leaders who are working to raise public awareness of the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit and its potential benefits for California families.

> "We receive so many invitations and cannot meet with everyone. Our designees carefully inform us. It be as effective as meeting directly with the official. Don't underestimate the power of your voice."
> *Congresswoman Luz Rivas*

The visit coincided with the first day of high school classes. After touring the campus, Congresswoman Rivas met with students enrolled in St. Genevieve's Leadership and Advocacy course, offered in partnership with Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Students who successfully complete the course are eligible to earn three college credits.

Unlike a traditional course built around a fixed sequence of lessons, the curriculum evolves as students research policy, meet with public officials, communicate with the media and respond to new developments. The class has one central objective: persuading Governor Gavin Newsom to opt California into the federal program.

During their presentation to Congresswoman Rivas, students addressed what they described as common misconceptions surrounding the tax credit.

First, they emphasized that the program is a federal tax credit, not a state-funded school voucher. Beginning in January 2027, qualifying taxpayers may claim a dollar-for-dollar federal income-tax credit of up to $1,700 for cash contributions to approved Scholarship Granting Organizations. Those nonprofit organizations will use the contributions to provide scholarships for eligible K–12 students.

Students also challenged the perception that the program would benefit only private-school students or reduce existing state and local funding for public education. Under the federal framework, scholarships may support qualified educational expenses connected with public, charter and private education. Examples identified by federal education officials include tutoring, educational materials, test preparation, internet service, private-school tuition and services for students with disabilities.

For California students to benefit, the state must elect to participate and submit a list of qualifying Scholarship Granting Organizations to the Internal Revenue Service. As of July 24, 2026, California was not included on the IRS list of states that had elected to participate in the program for 2027.

California residents may still be able to claim the federal credit by contributing to an approved Scholarship Granting Organization in a participating state. However, federal rules require those organizations to use the contributions to assist eligible students within the state in which the organization is listed. Students argued that without California’s participation, contributions from California taxpayers could support educational opportunities in other states rather than California.

The students cited an Education Reform Now analysis projecting that California could generate approximately $3.1 billion annually for scholarships, tutoring and other educational supports if 30% of eligible California taxpayers participated. The projection is based on an assumed participation rate and does not represent guaranteed funding.

They also presented polling released by Democrats for Education Reform showing that 59% of California voters supported Governor Newsom opting into the program, while 25% opposed participation. Reported support included 77% of California Democratic voters, 76% of Black voters and 68% of Latino voters.

Congresswoman Rivas listened carefully as the class presented its research and described its efforts to reach policymakers. She congratulated the students on their initiative and discussed their recent meeting with Brooks Allen, an education adviser to Governor Newsom.

“You should feel proud that you were able to meet with him,” Congresswoman Rivas told the students. “We elected officials receive so many invitations to meetings that we cannot possibly meet with everyone who requests one. You can be sure that our designees are careful to inform us of what was said and can be as effective as meeting directly with the official. Don’t underestimate the power of your voice.”

The meeting with Congresswoman Rivas marked the latest step in an ambitious student-led public-awareness campaign. Students previously organized a campus rally and mobilized approximately 1,100 classmates to form a line stretching from the school’s entrance to a waiting postal official nearly a mile away. Together, they mailed 15,000 purple postcards urging Governor

Newsom to opt California into the program.

Despite those efforts—and despite news organizations attending and recording portions of student events—the campaign has received limited published or broadcast coverage. The students are now turning that experience into their next area of study: examining why a policy that could direct billions of federal dollars toward educational assistance for eligible California families has attracted comparatively little sustained public attention.

As part of the Leadership and Advocacy curriculum, the class will explore how editorial decisions are made, what makes a public-policy story compelling to news organizations and audiences, and whether misconceptions about the tax credit have contributed to the limited coverage.

The inquiry comes as many California schools and districts face significant financial pressures and difficult budget decisions. Students hope their work will encourage a broader, fact-based public conversation about the program before California makes its participation decision.

The Federal Scholarship Tax Credit was established under Section 25F of the Internal Revenue Code. Beginning January 1, 2027, eligible individual taxpayers may claim a federal income-tax credit of up to $1,700 for qualifying cash contributions to approved Scholarship Granting Organizations. Students eligible to enroll in a public elementary or secondary school and whose household income does not exceed 300% of their area's median gross income may qualify for scholarships.

ABOUT ST. GENEVIEVE PARISH SCHOOLS

St. Genevieve Parish Schools is a Catholic educational community serving students in Panorama City and the greater San Fernando Valley. Through a mission centered on academic achievement, spiritual formation, character development and service, St. Genevieve prepares students to become informed, compassionate and engaged leaders. Its Leadership and Advocacy course gives students the opportunity to earn college credit while applying classroom learning to public policy and civic participation. It is Nationally Recognized as a School of Character.

Dan Horn
St. Genevieve Parish Schools
email us here
