

2015 BRADLEY PRIZES

NOMINATION FORM

Deadline for submission:
February 6, 2015

Submitted by:

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Submitted to:

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NOMINEE INFORMATION:

Name:	John Kirtley	Organization:	Step Up for Students; KLH Capital
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NOMINEE'S AREA OF EXPERTISE:

Education Reform

STATEMENT OF NOMINATION:

John Kirtley, a venture capitalist who relocated from New York City to Tampa, has created the largest school-choice program in the nation. Kirtley expanded a \$50 million program into a \$358 million program currently serving 70,000 students. Under current law, if the program hits prescribed fundraising targets, this program will grow to top \$1 billion in just five years.

The program began modestly. New to Tampa, Kirtley founded a modest privately funded scholarship program. Fortuitously, he soon was able to expand the program with a partnership with the Children's Scholarship Foundation, at the time just newly founded by John Walton and Ted Forstmann.

Then, in a local version of "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," Kirtley, a nonpolitical venture capitalist, personally convinced the Assembly Speaker, a new Senate Majority Leader, and newly elected Governor Jeb Bush to create a state tax credit to encourage charitable contributions to scholarship programs. Kirtley saw this step as the fuel that could take a modest private scholarship initiative to scale.

Kirtley was right. With the tax credit as his leverage point, he has raised more than \$1.7 billion in private charitable contributions since 2001.

In the recent gubernatorial election, Rick Scott was re-elected over an anti-school choice candidate by almost exactly the number of additional minority votes he received – a number that closely approximated the number of scholarship recipients in the state.

Kirtley has transformed lives, created a statewide movement, and altered the politics of Florida, a key swing state.

Kirtley, vice chairman of the Alliance for School Choice and the American Federation for Children, also generously gives his time to help others replicate his success in other states.

REFERENCES:

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