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Superintendent

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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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HORNE CITES VIDEO EVIDENCE THAT A CHARTER SCHOOL IN DOUGLAS IS ACCEPTING STUDENTS FROM MEXICO

PHOENIX (Thursday, May 21, 2009) -- Arizona State Schools Chief Tom Horne today released a video that demonstrates conclusively that, contrary to previous denials, the Omega Alpha Academy charter school in Douglas, Az., is accepting students who reside in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico.

In 2008, the school was questioned by Arizona Department of Education (ADE) staff following allegations that the school enrolled students who actually live in Mexico. Omega Alpha provided documentation that claimed each of their students is an Arizona resident. The Executive Director of the school, Jose Frisby, wrote ADE a letter stating in part that, *“before we enroll any student, we require that the student verify his or her Arizona residency. When a student’s family cannot provide any of these records... we obtain a certified statement from the Arizona resident with whom the student resides.”*

Additional and more detailed allegations came to light in April of this year, and ADE sent a staff member to videotape conclusive evidence.

Horne stated, “Contrary to previous denials, Omega Alpha Academy is accepting dozens of students who do not live in Arizona. Videotaped evidence shows students being transported to and from school in several large passenger vans filled with Omega Alpha students that move directly from the school to the Mexican border in the afternoon and directly from the border to the school each morning. The scheme is open and blatant. Since these vans operate either on school property or in areas immediately adjacent to the property, in full view of school staff, in order to pick up and drop off students, it is impossible that school leadership is unaware of this practice.”

Horne added, “Previously, ADE put a stop to this practice when it occurred with district schools. However, we have been informed by the Attorney General’s office that charter schools are exempt from the provisions of A.R.S. §15-823, pursuant to A.R. S. §15-183(D)(5). We therefore respectfully request that the Legislature immediately pass a law making A.R.S. §15-823 applicable to charter schools. We also request that there be an emergency clause so that we can stop making payments as soon as possible.”

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