

Policy Concurrence Proposal

Proposed by the LWVSWMO
Education Committee for
adoption at the state level



June 4, 2025 (via Zoom) Committee Members Presenting: Cindy Mueller, Sue Walker, Rebecca Callaway

Our Presentation

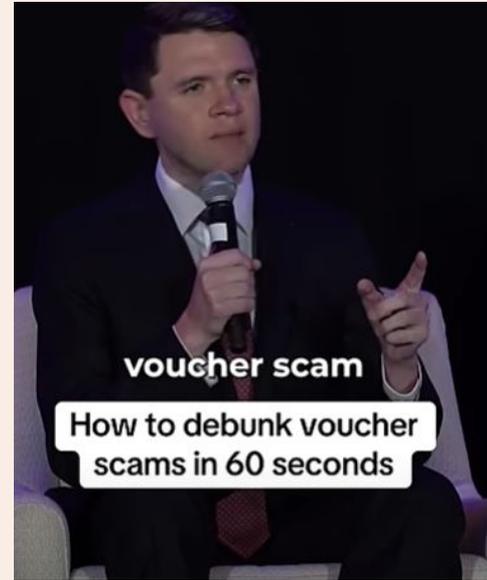
- Introduce the problem
- Why do we recommend this policy?
- Define vouchers— and current Missouri voucher program
- How voters weigh in —when they get the chance
- Explain who is actually behind the push to privatize education
- Cautionary tales from our neighbor states
- Additional reasons to oppose vouchers
- How to advocate
- Questions

The problem we face

When lawmakers allocate public funds to private schools or nonpublic education opportunities, **they are privatizing education.**

–LWV Ohio

Texas passes a BILLION dollar voucher bill. [Texas Tribune 5/3/25](#)
Federal Voucher Proposal of \$20 Billion [NPR 5/13/25](#)



Texas Rep James Talarico (former middle school teacher) declares [vouchers](#) are [“welfare for the wealthy.”](#)

Do we NEED a new policy?

Advocating for public schools without a new policy **IS** possible.

[LWV Illinois](#) had success fighting vouchers based on this basic policy:

The League of Women Voters believes that the government must provide an equitable, quality public education for all children from pre-K through grade 12. A quality public education is essential for a strong, viable, and sustainable democratic society and is a civil right.

However, Illinois does not have a governor promoting vouchers, and the “super majority” of their state is not pro voucher.



Illinois: “Invest in Kids” tax credit Not Renewed!

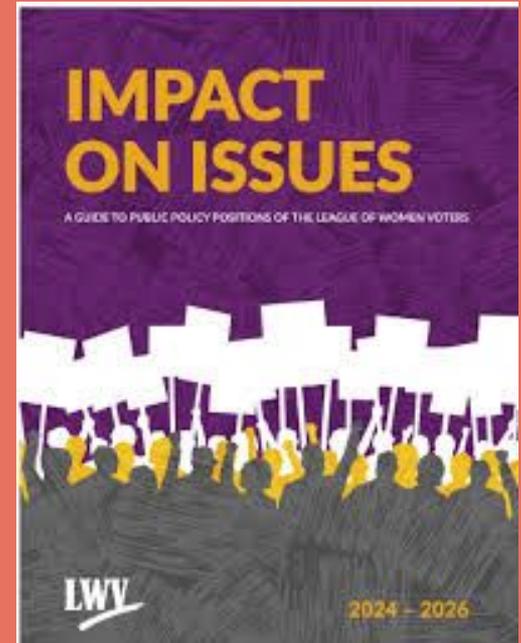
- Legislators allowed it to **Sunset** on Jan 1, 2025
- Donors received tax credit worth 75 cents for every dollar donated, up to \$1 million.
- State capped donations at \$100 million and credits at \$75 million — limits that were never hit, according to state data
- “Illinois is likely the first state to kill an existing private school choice program without court intervention.”

[Chalkbeat Chicago 11/14/23](#)

LWV Position

Quality Education The 1974 – 1976 LWWUS Program included the phrase “**equal access to quality education**,” reflecting League recognition that “equality” and “quality” are inseparable.

However, LWWUS has never undertaken a process for determining a common League definition of quality education that could serve as a basis for action nationwide. Therefore, when the definition of quality is a key factor in a state or local community, a local or state League must conduct its own study rather than relying on the LWWUS position to take action. Many Leagues that have member agreement on quality education in specific terms use their positions to support an array of local and state educational reforms. **A number of Leagues have used this position to oppose private school vouchers. LWWUS is a member of the National Coalition for Public Education, which opposes vouchers.**



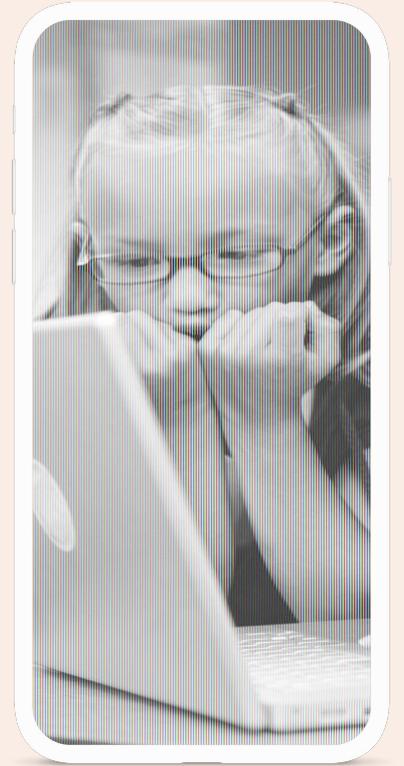
Current LWVMO policy

- -Support for **equal opportunity in education**, access to **quality** programs, and **adequate financing** for pre-K through 12.
- -Support public schools that have accountability and transparency in matters of governance, accreditation, and funding.
- -Support holding **charter schools** to the same requirements, certifications, student services, teacher training, classroom materials and leadership as all other public schools in Missouri.
- -Oppose [charter school expansion](#) until such time as the same standards are applied to all schools receiving public funding.

**GUIDE TO
STATE
ACTION**

2023-2025

[LWVMO GUIDE TO STATE ACTION, 2023-2025](#) (see page 54-58) for additional policy and background on funding, charter schools, etc.)



LWVNH Policy:

LWVNH believes that parents who choose not to use the public schools do so of their own volition and that public funds should not be used to support homeschooling or private schools and academies, including religiously affiliated schools.

[Adopted 2018 \(pdf\)](#) "through study and consensus"

[LWVNH Public Education Studies](#)

[LWVH 2017 Consensus Questions \(pdf\)](#)



Other leagues have anti-voucher policies.

Too Brief?



LWVO **opposes vouchers.**

LWVO believes that **public funds should be used only in public schools.**

([full policy](#))

Too Detailed?



The League **opposes the use of public funds for private school vouchers.**

Should the use of public funds for private school vouchers be considered at some point, the League believes the following **criteria** should apply: ... ([criteria listed](#))

Nice, but ...



Supports holding all schools and entities that receive public funds to the **same educational accountability and transparency** standards as traditional public schools.

Opposes shifting public dollars to private and **for profit** entities: this includes vouchers, tax credits, scholarships or other use of public tax dollars to fund private and parochial school (real or **virtual**) attendance.

Why THIS policy?

LWVNH believes that parents who choose not to use the public schools do so of their own volition and that public funds should not be used to support homeschooling or private schools and academies, including religiously affiliated schools.

- 1** Acknowledges a **parent's right to choose** alternative instruction for their own child.
- 2** Emphasizes **PUBLIC money for PUBLIC** schools without naming all voucher types.
- 3** Proactively **references homeschooling** (now 1 in 16 Missouri students).
- 4** Recognizes there is more than one type of private school (**religious or otherwise**)
- 5** Doesn't include any, "**but if** public money is used ..." provisions. Opposes it. Period.



But we don't
have “vouchers”

A rose by any other name . . .

VOUCHERS

This is the generic term for any form of public payment to help parents send their children to private schools, including religious schools.

Legislators avoid the word voucher and use more marketable terms:

“personalized learning”

“opportunity scholarships”

“parental choice”

“Freedom accounts”

[NEA Today March 2025](#)

REFUNDABLE TAX CREDIT VOUCHERS

Provide tax credit to families, reimbursing them for their private education expenses.

Form of ESA—pays for tuition & array of expenditures

Not funded by donations

These tax credits have existed for a long time, but only recently caps have reached typical voucher/per pupil funding amounts of many thousands of dollars.

Two prominent examples of such [voucher programs are found in Oklahoma](#) (HB 1934 of 2023) and Alabama (HB 129 of 2024). MO tried with [HB77](#)

EDUCATIONAL SAVING ACCOUNTS (ESAs)

Latest trend in publicly subsidized private school education.

AKA

Education Scholarship Accounts
Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts (PLSA)
Individualized Education Account Program (IEAP)

These programs pay parents a large portion of the money the state would otherwise have spent to educate their children in exchange for an agreement to forego their right to a public education.

Consistent with all voucher programs, they divert taxpayer funds to subsidize private choices and undermine principles of equity and accountability, all while doing nothing to improve the quality of education.

TUITION TAX CREDIT (TTCs)

Missouri's Empowerment Scholarship Account (MoScholars)

Form of voucher that is integrated into the tax code to be used by parents to subsidize private schools. Individuals / **corporations donate & receive a tax credit in return.** =Wealthy tax break that undermines public resources

TTCs reduce the amount of money available for evidence-based school improvement strategies that address the specific needs of each school community.

\$50 Mil GR funds now heading for private schools.

Missouri's Vouchers "Scholarships"



The pro ESA ShowMeInstitute is the [source of this 2021 graphic](#). They argue these scholarships are NOT vouchers or education savings accounts (also ESA), they don't impact the education funding formula, and they would even increase funding for public schools.

[Missouri Budget Project 2024](#) presents data showing vouchers increase cost of local taxpayers.

MOScholars

Started in 2021- called “Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Account” (MoScholars) Still has limits = not universal YET

- Initially limited to students with IEP, lower income
- Income criteria raised & other qualifications lowered in 2024
- Students must have attended at least a semester of public school (unless starting K)
- Still “No” for homeschooling— but “Yes” to [Family Paced Education](#) (FPE)

NOTE: A “**SCHOOL CHOICE**” bill is progressing through legislation and will most likely be in place for the next school year. This is NOT the same thing as vouchers in our state. “School choice” in this instance refers to “Open Enrollment” = allowing students to attend a public school out of their district (initially voluntary for districts to participate).



- Donors receive a tax credit for contributing to the “scholarships” (100% credit—not exceed 50% of tax bill—carried over 4 years)
- Limits \$75 mil cap on tax credits (= taxes we don’t get!)
- [Reported Usage](#): 2677 in 2024 @ \$6375 average
- Private donation have NOT capped out so **Gov. Kehoe proposed \$50 mil from GR General Revenue (tax payer money) to supplement the program.** (House Approved; Senate said no; eventually reinstated and ready for signing)

Link to [SOS page explaining the MOScholars](#) & permitted expenditures

Link to [MoScholars Parent Handbook](#)

Statistics: [EdChoice](#)

Voters are NOT asking for this!



Nov 2024: Vouchers on the Ballot



NEBRASKA

[Referendum 435. Private Education Scholarship Program](#)

A "retain" vote supported upholding Legislative Bill 1402, which authorizes the state treasurer to administer an education scholarship program with a \$10 million budget beginning in fiscal year 2024-2025 for eligible students to cover all or part of the cost of attending any non governmental, privately operated elementary or secondary school in the state that fulfills all accreditation requirements.

Voters said REPEAL this 2024 Bill. 57-42.

(Still allows for tax credits.)



COLORADO

[Amendment 80](#)

Voters said NO- 50-49 (needed 55 to pass)

providing in the state constitution that "each K-12 child has the right to school choice;"

providing that "all children have the right to equal opportunity to access a quality education," and that "parents have the right to direct the education of their children;" and

defining school choice to include neighborhood schools, charter schools, private schools, homeschools, open enrollment options, and future innovations in education.



KENTUCKY

[Kentucky Constitutional Amendment 2](#), Allow State Funding for Non-Public Education Amendment

Voters said NO - 64 -25

The amendment would have allowed for laws to provide state funding for non-public education. The measure would have added language to the Kentucky Constitution saying that "the General Assembly may provide financial support for the education of students outside the system of common schools." In the Kentucky Constitution, K-12 public schools are referred to as common schools

Additional Sources with analysis [NEA Today 11/8/24](#)

[Propublica 11/9/24](#)

And even when the voters speak . . .

ARIZONA

In 2018 Arizona voters said **NO (65% to 35%)** to universal school vouchers.

Proposition 305

A "yes" vote was to uphold the contested legislation, [Senate Bill 1431](#), which would phase in an expansion of the state's [Empowerment Scholarship Accounts](#) (ESAs) program to make all public school students eligible to apply for an ESA.



Arizona Legislators did not respect the will of their voters!



In 2022 they “**pioneered the largest school voucher program in the history of education.**”

Consequences

- \$1.4 billion budget shortfall
- \$429 million cost expected 2024, \$644 mil 2025 (original estimate was \$65 mil)
- Deep cuts to other state programs (\$331 mil for water infrastructure, \$41 mil transportation, etc)
- Public school still educate 92% of students—but each school has an average of \$300,000 less funds to use
- Majority of users are NOT former public school attendees
- Legislators having [difficulty trying to go back and cap some spending!](#)

Who *IS* asking for vouchers?



BIG Money Funded

- Same billionaires who funded “Moms for Liberty”
- Christian Nationalists like Herzog Foundation
- Heritage Foundation (Project 2025)
- Leadership Institute
- Southeastern Legal Foundation (GA firm Involved in anti-DEI lawsuit Springfield)
- Americans for Prosperity (Koch)
- American Federation for Children (DeVos)
- ETC
- **Politicians funded by those above**

Barn Raiser: [“The Dark Money Defunding Public Schools 9/5/24](#)
Firstfocus. [1/30/25 “School Vouchers and the Threat to Public Education](#)
NBC 3/30/23 [Group Helps Fuel Rapid Expansion of Public Money for Private Schools](#)
Bucks County Beacon [1/12/24 Dark Money School Vouchers are Having a Moment](#)

Discredit
Defame
Destroy
Defund
REPLACE

GROOMERS

WOKE
AGENDA

LITTER
BOXES/
FURRIES
ACT

CRT

TEACHING
KIDS TO
HATE
AMERICA

DEI lowers
standards

PROJECT 2025 (full pdf)

Page 5:

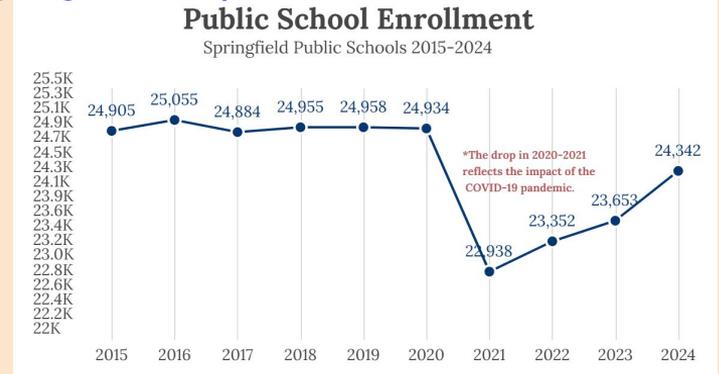
*In our schools, the question of parental authority over their children’s education is a simple one: **Schools serve parents, not the other way around.** That is, of course, the best argument for universal school choice—a goal all conservatives and conservative Presidents must pursue. But even before we achieve that long-term goal, parents’ rights as their children’s primary educators should be non-negotiable in American schools. **States, cities and counties, school boards, union bosses, principals, and teachers who disagree should be immediately cut off from federal funds***

Arguments **FOR** vouchers:

- Provides parents more choices for their children
- Makes all schools better because they must compete and be transparent so students stay
- Better academic outcomes for those from low performing schools
- Better environment for special needs children

[Heritage Foundation 1/24/19](#) “Here are 10 Reasons School Choice is Winning”

Covid boosted the voucher movement . . .
[Springfield Daily Citizen 2/14/25](#)



Anecdotal Evidence

Local Private & Homeschool Success Stories

Mom says that a wheelchair ramp was instantly provided by a private religious school when her daughter’s public school was taking too long.

[Spfd NewsLeader Opinion Letter 6/2/24](#)

Homeschooling on the Rise in Springfield
[Springfield Daily Citizen 2/25/25](#)

“What Homeschooling Hides” [WashPost 12/2/23](#)
Many homeschool parents do not want vouchers if regulations are attached.

CAUTIONARY TALES from our neighbors



Our neighbor to the North

IOWA: Students First Educational Savings Account (ESA)

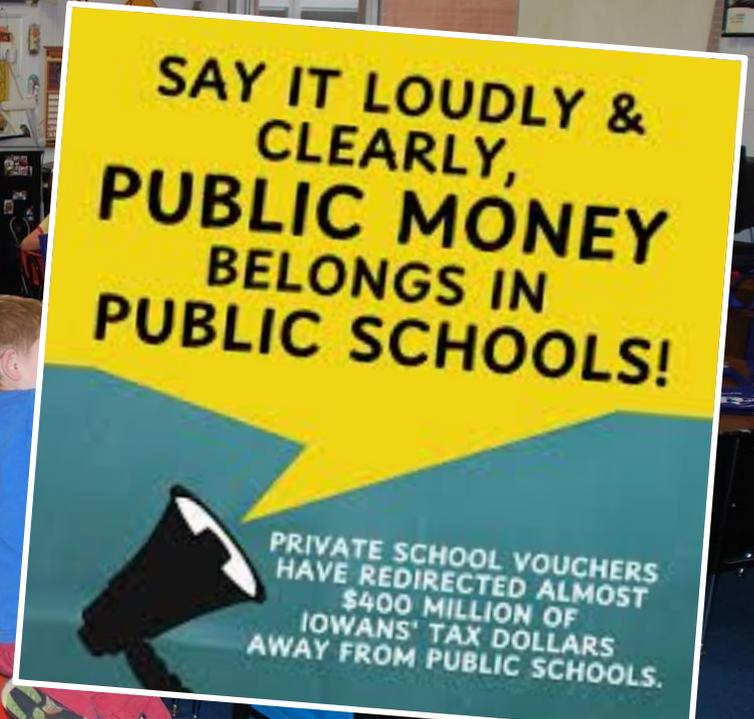
(launched **2023**)

Initially limited by income, now open to all students for **2025-26.**

Parents receive an amount equal to the per-pupil funding allocated to public school districts. (\$7826, 2024-25). Pays for tuition & other expenses for accredited private schools.

Private schools increased tuition the first year it was enacted.

[Iowa Starting Line 6/10/24](#)



[Iowa Starting Line 5/31/25](#): Vouchers are off limits to State Auditor because a 2023 law prevents any accountability of private school finances, standards, or use of vouchers.

Our neighbor to the South

ARKANSAS: Education Freedom Account (EFA)

Eligibility:

Initially, eligibility was limited to certain students, including those with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, foster children, children of active duty military members, students enrolled in a failing public school, and students entering kindergarten for the first time.

\$6,856 for the 2024-2025,

\$7533 for 2025-26

For the 2025-2026 school year, ALL K-12 students in Arkansas will be eligible to apply.

School “Choice” programs like the “[Arkansas LEARNS Act](#)” are a bait & switch!

- 82% receiving vouchers in 2024-25 kept attending the same private or homeschool they had been attending!
- Only 5% of voucher recipients for the 2024-25 school year left a traditional public school
- Most of the money is going to the Central and NW regions = **subsidies to the wealthiest areas.**

[Arkansas Times 1/2/25](#)

Arkansas LEARNS

- LITERACY
- EMPOWERMENT
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- READINESS
- NETWORKING
- SCHOOL SAFETY

Something else they are “Learning”

Homeschool parents are spending most of the money on non-academic projects like horseback riding & baseball camp.

Just like Arizona, Ark Legislators are meeting resistance when trying to regulate this! “Trust Parents...”

[ArkTimes 4/10/25](#)

Our neighbor to the East

Tennessee: **Education Savings Account (ESA)** **Recently expanded**

20,000 education vouchers of around \$7,000 each for 2025-26 school year.

10,000 vouchers for lower income, disabled or otherwise eligible

10,000 for ANY student (cruelty bonus: **denies access to non citizens**)

[AP 2/12/25](#)

After Tennessee failed to pass a voucher program due to Republican concerns about depleting rural public schools, “School Freedom Fund” billionaires spent \$4.5 million in the PRIMARY.

Clear message: “Get in line on vouchers or get primaried.” Politicians got in line.

[TennOutlook 7/31/24](#)
[Firstfocus.org 1/30/25](#)

Our neighbors to the West

OKLAHOMA:

L. N. Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities (launched **2010**)

Vouchers to qualifying students with special learning needs with qualifying Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

Average voucher \$8083

Equal Opportunity Education Scholarship (launched **2013**)

Tax credits for donations to Scholarship-Granting Organizations (SGOs), nonprofits that coordinate private school scholarships for students from households with incomes that do not exceed 300% of the level qualifying for the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program (FRL)

Parental Choice Tax Credit (launched **2024**)

100% student eligibility

Up to \$7500 private school / \$1000 homeschool

Source: [EdChoice](#)

Kansas:

Kansas's Tax Credit for Low-Income Students Scholarship Program (launched **2015**)

Allows individuals and corporations to claim a 75% tax credit for contributions to approved Scholarship-Granting Organizations (SGOs), nonprofits that provide private school scholarships to students from lower-income families.

SB 75 introduced Jan 2025 and moving forward

Tax credits for parents of students not attending public school

\$8000 for accredited private school

\$4000 non accredited private school; homeschool

“The legislation is capped at \$125 million for the first year, but would increase by 25% each year, as long as tax credits reach 90% of the cap. Kansas State Department of Education data shows there are currently 26,000 students enrolled in private schools, which means the annual cost for the voucher program could exceed \$200 million by the fourth year.”

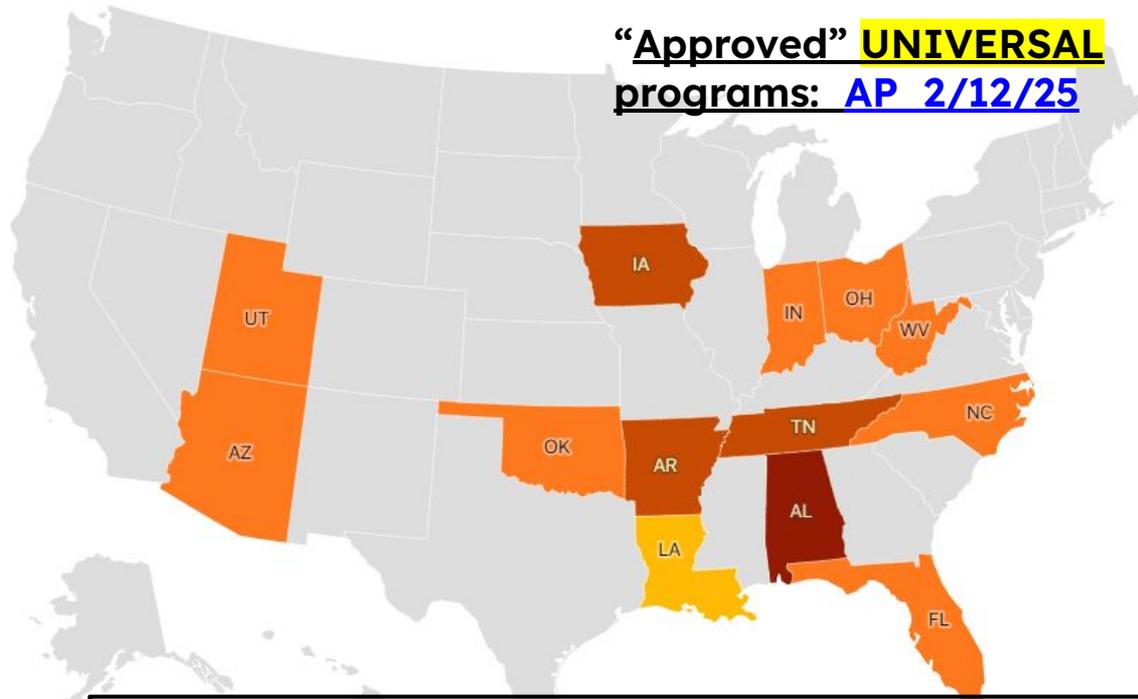
[Kansas Reflector 1/29/25](#)

More states adopting 'universal' school vouchers

Thirteen states have approved programs that allow families, regardless of income, to use public tax dollars to fund alternatives to public education for their children, including private schools.

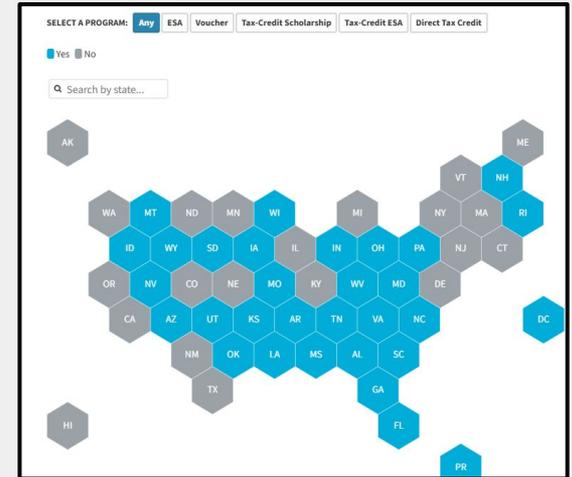
Year in effect

Current year (2024-25) 2025-26 2026-27 TBD



Many other states have vouchers of some kind.

[Education Week 3/17/25 Interactive Map](#)



[Mo Independent 3/28/25](#) “Trump’s ‘school choice’ push adds to momentum in state houses.” Nice summary

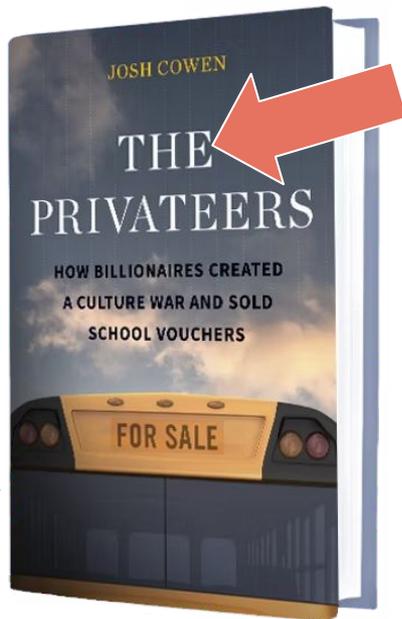
More Reasons to fight vouchers



Private isn't always better

A [study published by the Fordham Institute](#) states, “The (Ohio) students who used vouchers to attend private schools fared worse on state exams compared to their closely matched peers remaining in public schools.”

Researchers at the University of Notre Dame studied [Indiana's](#) costly voucher program and [determined that students using vouchers were not keeping up academically with public school students.](#)



Josh Cowen

Professor of Education Policy, Michigan State U

- Initially supported vouchers
- 75% of the students who use vouchers are enrolled in private schools already.
- Other 25% suffer academically because they attend “subprime” schools that pop up when states offer new subsidies.
- 40% of the schools that received voucher funds in [Wisconsin](#) have closed
- “education equivalent of predatory lending.”
- In some cases, voucher recipients also used the money for SeaWorld and Walt Disney World tickets and big-screen televisions.
- **Rural districts feel the negative effects the most** as dedicated revenue dips

A [Louisiana](#) study published in the [American Economic Journal](#) found that participation in the voucher plan “lowers math scores . . . and also reduces achievement in reading, science, and social studies.”

Additional sources:

[Tennessee Lookout 1/25/25](#) [Iowa Starting Line 6/10/24](#) [Kentucky Lantern 2/19/24](#)

From NEA [NEA Today March 2025](#)

- ❖ **Fact #1: There's no link between vouchers and gains in student achievement**
- ❖ **Fact #2: Vouchers undermine accountability for public funds**
- ❖ **Fact #3: Vouchers do not reduce public education costs**
- ❖ **Fact#4: Vouchers do not give parents real educational choice**
- ❖ **Fact #5: Vouchers are rooted in segregation and perpetuate racism**
- ❖ **Fact #6: Voucher programs give choice to private schools, rather than students and their families**

Additional **Advocacy Talking Points** from sister leagues:

Ill LWV: "[Why we're fighting school vouchers](#)"

Ohio LWV: [Privatizing Education - Focus for Advocacy](#)

Center for American Progress "[The Racist Origins of Private School Vouchers](#)" 2/12/17 Began after Brown vs. BOE

How to Advocate

Demystify the idea that private is better and that choice is a sufficient reason to abandon the common good. **Remember “choice” has limits:**

- **Private schools** not parents **pick students**
- Vouchers are an **income transfer** not freedom
- Informed choice is impossible **without transparency or accountability**
- Promoting **religion** is a priority of some private schools—and not a taxpayer responsibility
- Public schools and private schools compete for funds and **divide communities**
- Public schools are one of the few places where we meet as a public and promote our common interest. This **strengthens our communities and democracy.**

[LWV Ohio Focus on Advocacy 2023](#)

Advocate for full funding of public education.

DEFEND INSTITUTIONS! (Timothy Snyder’s On Tyranny, Ch 2)

Utah teachers
union won in the
courts.

[Salt Lake Tribune 4/18/25](#)

I don’t really like the city parks.

I want to join a country club so
my kid doesn’t have to play with
“those” kids and I want the city
parks system to pay for my
membership.

School Vouchers in a nutshell.

Bonus clip of Texas Rep Talarico
asking if [Elon’s Musks many children
are eligible for the Texas vouchers](#)

(The answer is yes).

Thank You!



LWVSWMO Education Committee:

Cindy M, Debra P, Donna T, Molly P, Kathy F, Debra W, Cynthia E, Jill S, Sue W,
Mary S, Claudia F, Carolyn M, Rebecca C, Paige D-Y, Robbie P, Carol C, Shelby B,
Cindy E, Danielle S, Marcia D

Any Questions?



3 extra slides . . .

Call them **VOUCHERS**, not
choice programs or
scholarships!

Educational Choice Act for Children (ECAC)

[5 Reasons why the ECAC is Bad for Students](#) EdTrust 5/12/25

“...create a 100% federal tax credit for individuals and corporations who donate to private scholarship-granting organizations. The ECCA could potentially divert over \$10 billion in taxpayer dollars each year — funds that should support public services — toward private schools.”

“Big Beautiful Bill creates a \$5 Billion tax shelter for private school donors”

This unique dollar-for-dollar rebate is something no other charity has ever gotten from the federal government.

[The Hill 6/9/25](#)



PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families

The White House | January 29, 2025

[Executive order 14190 on White House website](#)

Sec. 3. Guidance on Supporting State-based K-12 Educational Choice. Within 60 days of the date of this order, the Secretary of Education shall issue guidance regarding how States can use Federal formula funds to support K-12 educational choice initiatives.

What is our governor doing now?

Missouri governor calls for task force to keep state education funding flat

Gov. Mike Kehoe's policy director said a new formula for funding public schools should align with levels \$300 million behind the legislature's recommendations

BY: ANNELISE HANSHAW - JUNE 2, 2025 3:25 PM



Missouri Independent (GREAT FREE RESOURCE!)

- June 4, 2025: “[Governor calls for task force to keep education funding flat.](#)”
- June 5, 2025: “[New Funding for private school vouchers will ‘set precedent’ for future missouri budgets.](#)”

Missouri Voice

Texas has Talarico.
Missouri has Jess Piper
(former teacher turned
social advocate)
fighting for public
school funding.



Piper For Missouri

3d · 🌐

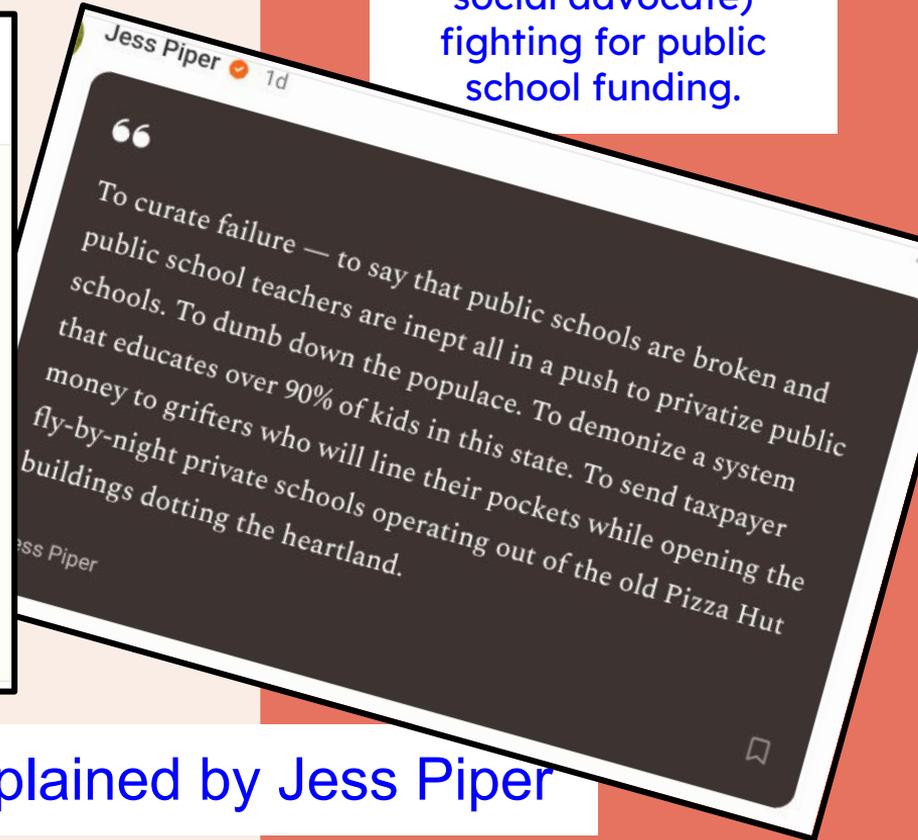
Sending taxpayer money to private religious schools is a violation of the Missouri Constitution...

Constitution

Effective - 27 Feb 1945, see footnote



IX Section 8. Prohibition of public aid for religious purposes and institutions. — Neither the general assembly, nor any county, city, town, township, school district or other municipal corporation, shall ever make an appropriation or pay from any public fund whatever, anything in aid of any religious creed, church or sectarian purpose, or to help to support or sustain any private or public school, academy, seminary, college, university, or other institution of learning controlled by any religious creed, church or sectarian denomination whatever; nor shall any grant or donation of personal property or real estate ever be made by the state, or any county, city, town, or other municipal corporation, for any religious creed, church, or sectarian purpose whatever.



[Video Clip: School Vouchers explained by Jess Piper](#)