

Lawmakers Set to Consider Yet Another Out-of-State ESA Voucher Expansion Bill

Within days of claiming it's "just for a few families," lawmakers have introduced a second ESA private school voucher expansion bill. [HB2898](#) would allow even more communities to use state funds at private, religious schools in Utah and elsewhere. The bill is a direct response to three students in the polygamous town of Colorado City who were denied ESA voucher funds after their Montessori school decided to relocate from Arizona to Utah. In the case of this family, they did not even appeal the decision and have since found other schooling, highlighting even more that these bills aren't for families at all - they are simply using Arizona families to promote a national privatization agenda at any cost. The proposal is set to be considered in the House Appropriations Committee, which the bill's sponsor chairs, this Wednesday afternoon.

This is a clear indication of the true motive behind these bills: they say it's "just for a few kids," but it's really about developing multiple ways to siphon Arizona tax dollars to out-of-state private schools. The special interests that [developed the ESA voucher program](#) will never stop pushing for expansion. After the failed overreach of Prop 305, they have reverted to their previous [piecemeal approach](#) to giving away all of our taxpayer dollars to private schools, [against the will of the voters](#). Arizona taxpayers shouldn't be forced to subsidize out-of-state private schools and no Arizona student should have to leave the state for a good education. Arizona tax dollars for Arizona schools — **PERIOD**.

Watch Dawn Penich-Thacker, SOSAZ Communications Director, [explain this simple concept](#) on Arizona Horizon.

Meanwhile, powerful interests continue to push behind the scenes to secure the votes in the full Senate for this year's other out-of-state expansion bill, SB1224. To stop these misguided, harmful bills, it's crucial to immediately do the steps in the Calls to Action:



Calls to Action!

- **Contact legislative leadership** and ask them to kill these bills because Arizona taxpayers shouldn't be forced to subsidize private schools in other states:
 - Senate President Karen Fann (602-926-5874 / KFann@azleg.gov)
 - House Speaker Rusty Bowers (602-926-3128 / RBowers@azleg.gov)
- **Contact your own senator and both your own House representatives.** Ask them to oppose SB1224 and HB2898 because it's not what their constituents want done with our tax dollars.
- **RTS NO** on HB2898, and [attend the committee hearing](#) if you can.
- **Share our UPDATED fact sheet** with your friends and family via email and social media so they can call and email too.

**Stop out-of-state
ESA voucher expansion**

**Oppose SB1224
AND HB2898**

AZ tax \$\$ for AZ schools!!

📞 Call Speaker Rusty Bowers (602)926-3128
✉️ RBowers@AZLeg.gov

📞 Call Pres. Karen Fann (602)926-5874
✉️ KFann@AZLeg.gov

 

 

Bills we're watching:

SB 1224



Oppose

**empowerment scholarships;
qualified schools; reservations
Expands ESA vouchers across
state lines**

Sen. Sylvia Allen

Would expand ESA vouchers outside of state lines to New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and California. Arizona is the only state in the nation using taxpayer funds to pay for private religious vouchers in other states. The costs of this expansion are not known. The existing ESA voucher program already drains more than [\\$110 million per year](#) in state funding directly from Arizona's public schools, and is rife with [accountability](#) and [mispending](#) issues. No Arizona student should have to leave the state to get a great education, and Arizona tax dollars should remain in Arizona. Awaiting a full Senate vote.

Watch the bill list below for several **NEW** bill additions, and keep your eye out for this logo **RTS** to tell you when you can use Request to Speak!

**NEW
RTS**

HB 2898



Oppose

**empowerment scholarships;
qualified schools; parent
Expands ESA vouchers across
state lines**

Rep. Regina Cobb

Like SB1224 in the Senate, this bill expands the definition of "qualified schools" to 2 miles across state lines for students living on a Native American reservation, but also to anyone living in small towns along the Arizona border, specifically students in the polygamous town of Colorado City, AZ for use in Hildale, UT, which is within two miles of the border. Scheduled for House Appropriations Committee, Wednesday.

SB 1060



Support

special education; group B weights

Allows districts to apply for grants for ultra high cost students

Sen. Sylvia Allen

[This bill](#) would allow school districts to request extra funding from the Department of Education's Extraordinary Special Education Needs Fund for students whose education costs more than 3 times the statewide per-pupil funding average. The bill also contains modest increases for a few special education weights: Speech Language Impairment, Other Health Impairment, and Self-Contained Severe Intellectual Disability. It's far from enough, but it's a respectable step toward better funding for students with special needs, the vast majority of whom choose public schools. Awaiting a Senate floor vote.

SB 1234



Support

additional assistance; restoration Accelerates DAA restoration for FY2020-21

Sen. Sylvia Allen

This bill would invest \$135 million of the state's current budget surplus toward restoring [District and Charter Additional Assistance](#), which was severely cut during the last recession and still not fully restored. DAA and CAA are flexible funding for district and charter schools that can be used for building improvements, textbooks, classroom materials and technology, as well as to supplement staff salaries. With schools statewide in crisis, the money can't come soon enough. Lack of funding to properly maintain and replace equipment and infrastructure [may ultimately cost the state more](#) than if schools had been adequately funded all along. Passed the Senate unanimously; awaiting House first reading and committee assignment.

SB 1193



Support

Office of Indian Education; assistance

Funds the Office of Indian Education

Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai

This bill would appropriate \$2 million from state lottery funding for the Office of Indian Education to hire 5 full-time employees. This office is tasked with meeting the educational and cultural needs of 55,572 Native students, but has never had state funding. Arizona's Native American schools and students are desperately under-resourced, with students [falling far behind](#) the rest of the nation in test scores, graduation rates and school resources. Teen suicide on the Navajo reservation is 4 times higher than the [already high rate](#) in Arizona overall. Assigned to Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development; not yet on an agenda.

SB 1491



Support

literacy; dyslexia; screening; appropriations

Funds dyslexia support and teacher training

Sen. Paul Boyer

This bill would implement the recommendations of the interim committee which studied this issue, give schools an extra year to implement the requirements for dyslexia support and teacher training passed last year, and appropriate \$1 million in FY 2021 to fund those efforts. Passed Senate Education Committee unanimously; awaiting Appropriations.

SCR 1003



Oppose

personal property tax; exemption
Exempts first \$1 million of personal property used for business purposes from taxation

Sen. JD Mesnard

This bill would increase the state's exemption for personal property used for agriculture purposes or in trade or business from \$185,811 to \$1 million. The bill's [fiscal note](#) estimates a direct General Fund cost of \$1.5 million starting in FY 2023, and a corresponding increase of the state's K-12 education formula cost. This means the state would have to come up with \$1.5 million more every year from the general fund in order to maintain current funding levels for K-12 education. Cutting revenue for public schools when our state is at the bottom of national rankings sends our state in the wrong direction. Awaiting a Senate floor vote.

NEW

HB 2198



Support

appropriation; Ganado School Loop Road

Allots \$900,000 for repairs to Ganado School Loop Road in northeastern AZ

Rep. Arlando Teller

The Ganado School Loop Road, built in 1991, hasn't been maintained or upgraded for 27 years. It is the only point of access both to the K-12 schools for 1,388 students and 93 teachers and for the community hospital, as well as for the school buses, parents and community members. The road is hazardous in winter snow and turns to mud in the spring, and the poor drainage is eating away at neighboring farmlands. The requested funding would also add a sidewalk and other safety mechanisms, as the vast majority of Ganado students walk to school. The county will fund \$400,000 toward the road's repair; this type of matching funding is rare. See mirror bill **SB1177** (sponsor: Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai). Passed House Transportation and Appropriations, awaiting House Rules (procedural).

NEW

RTS

HCR 2032



Oppose

initiatives; single subject; title
Requires ballot initiatives to hew to a single subject

Rep. Anthony Kern

Would ask voters to amend Arizona's Constitution to require initiatives be limited to a single subject expressed in the title; if it's not in the title it's void. In 2017, the Arizona Chamber of Commerce sued to knock the minimum wage increase initiative off the ballot, arguing that its dual wage and sick leave provisions violated the single-subject rule. The Arizona Supreme Court rejected that argument, saying voters could do as they liked. If passed, this bill would provide a way around that. Scheduled for House Elections Committee, Tuesday.

The Most Effective Ways to Reach Out to AZ Legislators



Join us at sosarizona.org or on [Facebook!](#)

NEW

RTS

HCR 2039



Oppose

initiative; referendum; signatures; legislative districts

Requires an equal percentage of ballot signatures from each legislative district

Rep. Mark Finchem

Would require signatures on initiative and referendum petitions come from a percentage of voters in each of Arizona’s 30 legislative districts. Because 85% of voters live in Maricopa and Pima counties, such a measure would likely sound the death knell for Arizona’s direct democracy process. Lawmakers also floated this proposal last year; it was incredibly unpopular with average citizens but had powerful interests pushing hard for it behind the scenes. Scheduled for House Elections Committee, Tuesday.

NEW

RTS

HCR 2046



Oppose

initiatives; referendums; reauthorization

Creates a 10-year shelf life for voter-protected initiatives

Rep. Rusty Bowers

This proposal would ask voters to amend the Constitution to require that initiatives and referenda receive “reauthorization” votes every 10 years in order to remain law. It’s written retroactively, so if it should pass, Prop 305 would once again be on the 2030 ballot, along with the Voter Protection Act itself. A direct attack on direct democracy. Scheduled for House Elections Committee, Tuesday.



2020 Session Timeline

- Monday, 1/13* *2020 Legislative Session begins*
- Thursday, 1/16* *Last day to introduce House bills before the seven-bill limit begins*
- Monday, 2/3* *Senate bill introduction deadline*
- Monday, 2/10* *House bill introduction deadline (extended; subject to change)*
- Friday, 2/21** **Last day for a bill to get out of committees in its originating house**
- Monday, 2/24** **Crossover Week begins; the expected start of this year’s budget bill work**
- Friday, 3/27** **Last day for a bill to get out of committees in its crossover house**
- Friday, 4/17** **Last day for conference committees, which iron out differences in bill versions passed by separate houses (date set by legislative rule; can be changed)**
- Saturday, 4/25** **100th Day of Session (the magic ending point we hope for; can be changed)**



sosarizona.org



/SaveOurSchoolsArizona



@arizona_sos