

Senator Sandra O'Brien's April 10 Guest Column in support of the universal voucher bill (SB11) published in The Columbus Dispatch is long on oratory, but amazingly short on legal and logical substance.

The [column](#) consists of many of the current talking points of national and state-level pro-voucher militants. Possibly the Senator is unaware that the goal of the voucher militants is to privatize the whole public common school system. The heroine of many voucher advocates is the former Secretary of Education Betsey DeVos, whose recurring refrain is “fund the student, not the system”. This to say, “Defund the public school system in order to fund the privates.”

The father of the American voucher scheme—Economist Milton Friedman—began advocating for school vouchers in the 1950's. At that time he championed the idea that the only role of government in education is to provide a voucher for use in a private school. Years later in 2006, Friedman advocated, in remarks to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) that parents should bear the cost of education, concluding that public education was a mistake.

Extraneous issues unrelated to the voucher scheme are laced throughout the Senator's column, such as two-thirds of property taxes go to public schools; Ohio has spent \$12 billion on new school buildings; some governors have won elections while advocating for vouchers; school choice is a national movement.

The Senator states: “The Ohio taxpayer has done a fantastic job in making sure our public schools are funded.” Further the Senator proffers that SB11 offers the best educational opportunity for students of both public and private schools. None of the content presented in the column is germane to the voucher debate.

What is germane in the voucher debate is:

- The state has the constitutional responsibility to secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools. (The current system is unconstitutional) The state has no constitutional obligation to fund other systems.
- SB11 would remove an additional \$1.13 billion from the state budget line items that had been traditionally reserved for public school districts.
- SB11 is a rebate to parents who have already entered their children in private schools.
- Private schools can and do discriminate regarding enrollment.
- Vouchers escalate segregation.
- Vouchers violate state constitutional provisions that prevent public funding of religious education.

In the grand scheme of the privatization of public education, vouchers are an interim step between public funding of the public common school and parents being solely responsible for paying for the education of their own children.