

Two March 7 Diane Ravitch blogs about the evils of a Texas charter chain and the Texas voucher fight should sound a warning to Ohioans.

The Texas IDEA Charter chain scandal rivals the ECOT rip-off in Ohio. Both charter narratives demonstrate how pay-to-play politics result in crimes against taxpayers, students, and public schools.

The voucher lobby, headed by the Governor of Texas, shows how politicians are bent on diminishing the public common schools to benefit vouchers. In Ohio, the Senate President is playing the role of the Texas Governor in cramming vouchers down the throats of Ohioans.

[Texas: This Rural Republican Was Ousted by Governor Abbott Because He Opposed Vouchers](#)

[By dianeravitch](#)

[March 7, 2024](#) //

8

Glenn Rogers is a veterinarian and a rancher who lives in Graford, Texas. In addition to his duties as a vet and a rancher, he served on the school board of the Graham Independent School District. He was elected to represent District 60 in the Texas Legislature in 2021. He is a conservative, and he tries to represent his rural constituents faithfully. They don't want vouchers. They want more funding for their local public schools and higher salaries for their teachers. People know their teachers. The teachers know their students and their families. The public schools are important for the local economy. The tradition of Friday night high school football games unifies the community; it's known as "Friday night lights."

When Representative Rogers voted against vouchers along with other rural Republicans, Governor Abbott unleashed an advertising blitz against them. The ads accused them of being "weak on security," which was a lie. Money from billionaires poured into the district to smear Rep. Rogers. He lost.

Rep. Rogers [released this statement, which was published in The Weatherford Democrat](#):

"I'll Wear No Man's Collar"

-Davy Crockett

First, I want to thank my supporters, those who voted for me and those who supported me prayerfully, financially, and in so many other ways. It has been the greatest honor to serve this district.

The corruption that exists at the highest level of Texas state government would have made Governor "Pa" Ferguson blush.

Governor Greg Abbott has defiled the Office of Governor by creating and repeating blatant lies about me and my House colleagues, those who took a stand for our public schools. I stood by the Governor on all his legislative priorities but just one, school vouchers. For just one disagreement, and for a \$6 million check from Jeff Yass, a Pennsylvanian TikTok investor, and voucher vendor,

CC3745 3.14.24 Thursday

Abbott went scorched earth against rural Texas and the Representatives who did their jobs-representing their districts.

My tenure in the Texas House included two general sessions, seven special sessions, redistricting, Covid, winter storm Uri, a Democrat quorum break, expulsion of a House member and the impeachment of Ken Paxton. It also includes a litany of conservative victories that made Texas safer, reigned in out-of-control government bureaucracy, lessened what had become a crushing tax burden on our families and businesses, and fostered economic growth.

I am not a good politician. I am just a Texas rancher who wanted to make a difference in my community. Who knew this simple mission would have resulted in three brutal campaigns?

Throughout my three campaigns, because of my unwillingness to be compliant with the two billionaire, "Christian" Nationalist, power brokers that run this state, I have been unmercifully slandered through the politics of unwarranted personal destruction on social media, radio, post mail, streaming sites, and cable television.

In my first race the opposition was the Wilks, Tim Dunn, Empower Texans, and the entire enterprise of dozens of PACs and "non-profits" they financed. The race ended in a hard fought Covid-delayed runoff victory against Farris Wilks' son-in-law.

In my second race, my opposition was Wilks and Dunn, Empower Texans (rebranded to Defend Texas Liberty), and the Voucher Lobby, including the American Federation for Children and the School Freedom Fund (based in Virginia). In that race, we dealt with a runoff and an expensive, unnecessary recount.

In my third race the opposition was all the above, but now included a rebranded Defend Texas Liberty (Texans United for a Conservative Majority), vastly greater money from the Voucher Lobby, and Governor Greg Abbott.

This time the millions of dollars spent spreading lies about my record and the non-stop false impugning of my integrity were just too much to overcome. The real losers in this race are:

- 1) Texas public schools;*
- 2) Rural Texas; and*
- 3) Representative Government.*

This morning, I have no regrets. I believe in the words of Sam Houston, "Do right and risk the consequences."

History will prove Ken Paxton is a corrupt, sophisticated criminal. History will prove vouchers are simply an expensive entitlement program for the wealthy and a get rich scheme for voucher vendors. History will prove Governor Greg Abbott is a liar.

History will prove that our current state government is the most corrupt ever and is "bought" by a few radical dominionist billionaires seeking to destroy public education, privatize our public schools and create a Theocracy that is both un-American and un-Texan.

May God save Texas!

[Editors Note: the Wilks brothers and Tim Dunn are oil-and-gas billionaires who are evangelical Christians; they want vouchers, and they use their money to control state government. Ken Paxton is the State Attorney General who was impeached by the Texas House of Representatives on multiple charges of corruption, based on whistleblower reports from his own staff. After Paxton's billionaire friends came to the rescue, giving a campaign contribution of \$2 million to Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who conducted the trial in the Senate, Paxton was acquitted. In this week's election, Attorney General Paxton and his wealthy friends ousted legislators and judges who tried to hold him accountable.]

Scandal in Texas: IDEA Charter Schools Placed Under Conservatorship

By [dianeravitch](#)

[March 7, 2024](#) //

2

IDEA, the largest charter chain in Texas, was just placed under conservatorship by the state education agency because of ongoing financial transgressions, self-dealing and conflicts of interest.

The state of Texas gave more than \$800 million last year to IDEA. The federal Charter Schools Program—which is rife with waste, fraud, and abuse—has gifted IDEA with \$300 million. It was a favorite of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

For years, both the state and the U.S. Department of Education have been aware of IDEA's profligate spending. This is the charter chain that wanted to lease a 6-passenger private jet for \$15 million for its executives. This is the chain that bought luxury box seats for the San Antonio Spurs basketball games. This is the chain that gave its founder a golden parachute of \$900,000 when financial abuses forced him out.

When there is so much that is fraudulent in the chain's spending, can you trust its reports about enrollment, grades, test scores, and graduation rates? Business leaders in San Antonio saw IDEA as a great replacement for public schools. They were hoodwinked.

[The Texas Tribune reported:](#)

Texas' largest charter school network has been placed under conservatorship by the Texas Education Agency after a years-long investigation into improper spending within the system of 143 schools.

The arrangement, announced Wednesday, is part of a settlement agreement between IDEA Public Schools and the TEA. IDEA had been under investigation since 2021 following numerous allegations of financial and operational misconduct.

It was revealed that IDEA officials used public dollars to purchase luxury driver services as well as \$15 million to lease a private jet, just two weeks after promising TEA it would be "strictly enforcing" new fiscal responsibility policies put in place in response to ongoing investigations, as reported by [San Antonio Express-News](#).

CC3745 3.14.24 Thursday

The revelations led the district to conduct an internal investigation, resulting in the firing of JoAnn Gama, former superintendent and co-founder of IDEA. Gama later filed a lawsuit against IDEA claiming wrongful termination. IDEA came to a \$475,000 settlement with Gama in January. This followed co-founder and CEO Tom Torkelson's departure in 2020; he was given a \$900,000 severance package.

The charter school district serves about 80,000 students in K-12. The schools are independently run but publicly funded with state dollars, having received about \$821 million in state funding in 2023-2024 school year.

Under conservatorship, the conservators will have the authority to oversee and direct any action of the district, facilitate a needs assessment, conduct onsite inspections and support the creation of a plan to address corrective action concerns. They will also report back to the agency regarding the district's progress in completing necessary corrective activities.

The conservators will not fully take over the governance of the district. But if the district doesn't make the necessary corrective measures that the conservators outline for them, a takeover could be possible in the future...

The news follows the [TEA takeover of Houston Independent School District](#) in June following years of poor academic performance at a single campus within the district, among other factors.