

David Pepper: Voucher outrage continues; We must demand audits

David Pepper appropriately calls for auditing of the private school voucher scheme.

When the current Attorney General was Auditor of State, he said he would follow a tax dollar wherever it went. Great! Awesome! What about vouchers and other direct payments to private schools? What happened in the case of ECOT? The ECOT Man, Bill Lager has never returned one dime of the more than \$100 million he stole from Ohio taxpayers.

\$1 Billion and Counting

Voucher Outrage Continues; We must DEMAND Audits

[David Pepper](#)

Aug 15, 2024

90

It's back to school time in Ohio.

And as we enter the new school year, and the end of the first full year of **universal vouchers** in Ohio, the numbers continue to explode (as they are in other states).

As [Cleveland.com wrote](#) Tuesday, the total cost of private school vouchers for the last school year (through August 7) ended up being....

\$966.2 million.

[Share](#)

And no surprise, the big jump in spending came from the newest voucher “program”—the one that **eliminated all restrictions** on who’s eligible to receive those vouchers:

*“Enrollment in EdChoice-Expansion ballooned last school year, compared to the previous year, not necessarily because families were choosing to attend private school for the first time, **but because the income limits had flexed to cover wealthier families already in private schools.**”*

Another factor: *“Many private schools are pressuring parents to take the vouchers, [while also increasing tuition rates.](#)”*

“[I]f parents have difficulty paying for the tuition, private schools can require the family apply for a voucher before they can seek financial aid from the school.

“It’s becoming a big money maker for these private schools because tuition isn’t capped in Ohio,” [one expert] said. “It makes Ohio kind of like the Wild West.”

(FYI. Ohio was long considered the “Wild West” when it came to for-profit charter schools as well. And those lax rules and willingness to look the other way led to one of the largest scandals in state history — when ECOT (the “Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow”) turned out to be a huge scam. Of course, ECOT sent gobs of that money to the Republican politicians who let it go on all those years).

One other thing in the Cleveland.com story.

One of the long-time champions of this disaster had this to say about the \$1 billion number: *“Yet what are we getting for our return of investment on that? We’re getting a lot of kids who are getting educated, probably a significantly higher rate than the ones that we’re spending the (rest of the money) on.”*

Folks, that is a state official **lying through his teeth**. The data tells us that the exact opposite is happening:

First, most of the growth in spending is going to kids who are “getting educated” at the schools where they were **already** getting educated.

Second, of the small % of vouchers being used for a student moving from a public school to a private school, the data is consistent and brutally clear: 88% of those vouchers will be used at a school with **lower test scores** than the school the student left, and those students’ scores will **drop annually, on average, 12% for every year** they use that voucher at that private school, versus the average scores from the public school they left.

That’s right—we are paying \$1 billion to get lower test scores!

How could that be?

Demand Audits Now

Well, it starts with the fact that of the \$1 billion that was diverted to private schools last year, and the \$5 billion that’s been spent on these vouchers since 1997, **NOT A PENNY** of any of that spending has **EVER BEEN AUDITED**.

That’s right, we have no idea how all that money is **actually** being spent. Because no one ever looks. We just know that test results are dropping, and we are paying billions for that lower performance.

Reminder: the ECOT on-line school scandal involved a charter school; Ohio charter schools *are* audited, and it **still** led to the biggest education scandal in Ohio history.

Here we are talking about \$1 billion in the past year, and \$5 billion since 1997, **completely unaudited**.

With that reality, two things follow:

1. **Not a single Democrat** (or reasonable Republican) in the legislature should vote for a single state budget again unless there is a process put in place to audit these billions;
2. **Mark my words**—if and when such audits are done, of billions in spending that has never been looked into, expended by the nation’s most corrupt statehouse where pay-to-play is rampant, this will turn into the **biggest scandal in the history of Ohio**.

Which is the reason why Republicans who’ve been the champions of this scam will do anything in their power to keep audits from happening.

Please be sure people know...