

Ohio's House Speaker is so enamored, so bewitched with his mission to replace the constitutionally-required public common school system with vouchers that he is attempting to twist Article I, section 7 of the Ohio Constitution to coincide with his zealously for privatization of public education.

In a news conference on the afternoon of Monday, July 21, the Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives actually said that the last sentence in Article I, section 7, requires the state to fund religious schools.

Article I, section 7 states:

§7 All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience. No person shall be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or maintain any form of worship, against his consent; and no preference shall be given, by law, to any religious society; nor shall any interference with the rights of conscience be permitted. No religious test shall be required, as a qualification for office, nor shall any person be incompetent to be a witness on account of his religious belief; but nothing herein shall be construed to dispense with oaths and affirmations. Religion, morality, and knowledge, however, being essential to good government, it shall be the duty of the General Assembly to pass suitable laws, to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of public worship, and to encourage schools and the means of instruction. (1851)

The Ohio Supreme Court in the 1872 Board of Education v Minor case ruled that this section does not require state-funded private education.

In 1945, the Ohio Supreme Court in Findley v Conneaut ruled that a municipality is without authority to issue bonds or expend funds raised by taxation for the support or maintenance of a sectarian school.

The Speaker also failed to reference the prohibition of support for religious education in Article VI, section 2.

The citizens of Ohio better well wake up to the vengefulness of some state officials toward the public common school system and their love affair for private schools.

All boards of education in Ohio should act in support of the EdChoice private school voucher litigation.