

The high taxpayer cost of operating three systems of education

The Ohio Constitution requires the state to secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state. (Article VI, section 2) This mandate passed by the citizens in 1851 had the purpose of securing for the taxpayers and students a high-quality education for all in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

By 1912 some progress had been made toward the 1851 mandate but more needed to be done. In 1913 Ohioans adopted another public school provision in the Ohio Constitution—“Provision shall be made by law for the organization, administration, and control of the public school system supported by public funds...” (Article VI, section 3) This mandate put in motion a game plan to reorganize school districts, which would provide greater educational opportunities more cost-effectively. By 1975 the 3500 school districts in the early 1900’s were reorganized into 617. The 10,000 one-room schoolhouses were eliminated.

From 1995 to date, misguided state officials have established two publicly funded counterfeit systems of education—privately operated charter schools and private schools that are largely subsidized by vouchers, direct payments, and tax-funded student transportation. These two alternative school systems currently cost Ohio taxpayers in the range of \$2.5 billion annually.

The current state arrangement for education is inefficient, and in the case of private school funding, is unconstitutional.

The state took a wrong turn in starting down the path forcing taxpayers to fund private schools and privately operated charters by legislating the so-called Fair Bus Bill in 1965. This bill forced school districts to provide student transportation to private schools. The floodgates then opened more and more as taxpayers were forced to provide Auxiliary Services, Nonpublic Administrative Cost Reimbursement and vouchers. The last Capital Improvement Bill added some facility money for private schools. Where will this madness end? When will Ohio taxpayers conclude that enough is enough?