

Ever wonder why the ECOT man, Bill Lager has avoided paying back the tax money he stole from Ohio taxpayers? Follow the campaign money.

The Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) closed seven years ago after the state started to claw back some of the funds Lager stole from Ohio taxpayers (school district funds).

Backstory:

ECOT was established in 2000 and closed on January 18, 2018. In 2016 the Ohio Department of Education demanded repayment of \$80 million in state funding due to ECOT charging the state for students not served.

The first year ECOT was in operation, the state clawed back in the range of \$1 million after a state audit revealed that ECOT collected tax funds for students not served. Phenomenally, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) signed an agreement that allowed ECOT to self-verify the student enrollment reported to the state for payment purposes. That is like giving a robber the keys to the bank safe. Amazing!

For about 15 years the state paid ECOT on the basis of unaudited student enrollment. For reasons unknown to the public, after about 15 years, ODE audited the ECOT enrollment and found ECOT overcharged the state \$60 million in one year. (It would be reasonable to believe that ECOT was stealing tax money since the second year of operation.)

When the state started clawing back stolen funds from ECOT, the school soon closed.

In June 2022 the State Auditor ordered the ECOT owner to repay \$117 million.

It is of interest that ECOT had the lowest graduation rate in the nation.

The state has been in litigation for several years, but it seems that the state has not been aggressive in its efforts to reclaim the stolen tax funds from Lager.

Lager, the ECOT man spent millions in campaign contributions to state officials and political parties. Some of those officials are still in power.

Some of those still in power received campaign funds over time. A partial listing of some of the recipients, at least part of whose campaign funds were received from Lager, follow:

- Matt Huffman: \$45,000
- Keith Faber: \$30,013
- Jon Husted: \$28,500
- Andrew Brenner: \$27,565
- Jamie Callender: \$12,400
- David Yost: \$11,395
- Frank LaRose: \$8,000

Political organizations that received funds from Lager:

- Ohio Republican State Central and Executive Committee State Candidate Fund: \$161,750
- Ohio House Republican Organization Committee (OHROC): \$147,799
- Republican Senate Campaign Committee (RSCC): \$115,707
- Ohio Republican State Central and Executive Committee State Account: \$50,750
- Ohio Democratic Party State Candidate Fund: \$32,000
- Franklin County Republican State Candidate Fund: \$11,000
- Ohio Democratic Party: \$10,000
- Ohio House Democratic Caucus (OHD): \$10,000

- Republican Senate Campaign Committee Building Fund: \$10,000
- Montgomery County Republican Party State Candidate Fund: \$7,500
- Ohio House Republican Organizational Committee Building Fund: \$6,000
- Licking County Republican State Candidate Fund: \$5,000
- Franklin County Republican Party Restricted Fund: \$2,000

Please note that both parties received campaign funds from Lager.

Democrat organizations received \$52,000 of the total of \$569,505, or less than 10% of the amount the other party received.

Regarding ECOT's stolen tax money; it is extremely doubtful that the state will ever collect any of the tax money Lager stole.