

Chris Quinn, Editor, Cleveland.com/The Plain Dealer weighs in on the House budget proposal to eliminate the State Board of Education's elected members.

The fact is that in 1953 Ohioans established in the Constitution the State Board of Education and moved the Superintendent of Public Instruction position from the Governor's office to the State Board of Education operation. As Chris Quinn points out in his [letter from the editor](#), the legislature and the Governor have legislated away this constitutional provision. A nefarious affront to the people of Ohio!

During the 135th General Assembly, state officials stripped the State Board of its primary responsibility by transferring such to the Governor's office. The 1953 amendment to the Ohio Constitution clearly specified that state leadership for education became a function of the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Governor and legislature rendered the amendment essentially null and void, leaving scant, few responsibilities for the Board. To add insult to injury, the House version of the budget eliminates the elected members from the Board and replaces the entire Board membership to 5 appointed members. The 5-member Board would have one member from the private school sector and one from the privately-operated charter industry.

The education privatizers are committed to remove the voice of the people from education.

When will Ohioans stand up against tyrannical state officials in Ohio?

Ohio voters removed politics from education. DeWine, lawmakers put it back: Letter from the Editor

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Ohio House Speaker Matt Huffman is again showing his contempt for the Ohio constitution, as he continues his assault on the Board of Education, which voters created with a constitutional amendment in 1953. (Samantha Madar/The Columbus Dispatch via AP, Pool)

Good faith by elected leaders was a prerequisite when Ohioans structured their state government, with a framework designed to hash out proposed laws through a series of legislative committee meetings before the state Senate and House voted on them and sent them to the governor.

No one seemed to contemplate that we might elect people to the Legislature who eschew good faith and work secretly to carry out personal agendas based on culture wars.

Today, instead of proposing laws based on state priorities and holding the hearings that might refine them into good-for-Ohio legislation, lawmakers hide their loony ideas in the state budget, secreting them away so effectively that our newsroom sometimes needs weeks to find them.

In the latest budget, the House under the rule of Speaker Matt Huffman has inserted measures to abolish the state's independent Elections Commission, so lawmakers can escape scrutiny on their elections misbehavior. And they have inserted a provision that would protect just about every police record from disclosure, converting police who now are accountable to the public because of transparency into something akin to the secret Stasi police of East Germany.

I'm not making this up.

The latest secret budget insertion our team has discovered might be the most illuminating, because it flatly disobeys the will of the voters while also demonstrating how Ohioans once did trust their elected officials to act in good faith.

I'm talking about a plan to all but end the state Board of Education, without legislation, a single hearing or a request for voter approval.

Gov. Mike DeWine and the Legislature started the assault on the Board of Education in the 2023 budget. When lawmakers could not get a law passed to strip the board of most of its power and give the duties to an education department overseen by the governor, they slipped the provision into the budget and passed it. Overnight, a board partly elected by us was crippled, with the governor completely in charge of education across the state.

In the 2025 budget, the House proposes to finish the job by wiping out all 11 elected members of the 19-member school board and going with just five members, all appointed.

What many don't know is that Ohio for many decades in the previous century concentrated all power over education into the hands of one person, overseen by the governor, as we now have again. It was a disaster. In 1953, voters resoundingly ended that system, adopting an amendment to the state constitution to create the state Board of Education to oversee the state's educational agenda.

I went back and read coverage of the issue in *The Plain Dealer*, which was quite a conservative newspaper back then. It passionately recommended passage of the amendment, to end having all educational decisions in the hands of one person, controlled by the governor.

"With no reflection intended at the present holder of the post, the job never has attracted men of the caliber it should for the simple reason that it is subject to the ebb and flow of politics... Long-range planning of school programs has also suffered because of the job's impermanence. The superintendent has not in the past supplied real leadership because he is the governor's mouthpiece and in a bad position to speak up when important legislation comes up."

Across the nation, states were abandoning the "archaic" model and going with elected statewide school boards, to make sure people had a say in their state's public schools. The goal was to remove the politics.

But, the amendment voters passed contained no details about the formation of the school board. The amendment gave that power to the Legislature. Voters trusted the Legislature to follow their will and set up a fair system. Because lawmakers of the day acted in good faith and respected the voters, they did just that, and the system worked for the next 70 years.

Now, the governor and state lawmakers who swore an oath to uphold the Ohio constitution have abandoned it, again. They are about to destroy the board that voters created to guide the education of their children, without ever asking voters if they agree. If DeWine and Huffman actually believed in what they are doing, they would put it before the voters.

But, as we regularly chronicle, they disdain the voters. They repeatedly have tried to weaken the power of the vote. They, quite simply, believe they are our overlords. They do not feel beholden to our constitution.

I raise this today for two reasons. One is to show how our elected leaders have abandoned their democratic principles to secretly plot against the citizens they profess to service, rejecting even the foundational document that gives them their power.

The other is note how much effort our team invests in uncovering these abuses, so you know about them.

And, because you regularly visit our platforms, you do know about them. But your neighbors who don't read our content don't, because almost no other newsroom covers it. And the vast majority of rural Ohioans who have no local newsrooms anymore don't either.

That's why DeWine and Huffman can abuse the Ohio constitution without consequence. They rely on widespread ignorance of their actions.

I close today with the last line in the 1953 *Plain Dealer* editorial advocating that voters take power over education away from the governor and vest it in a state school board.

CC4061 5.27.25 Tuesday

“Only apathy can beat this proposal. You cannot afford to be casual about your children’s education.”

I’m at cquinn@cleveland.com

Thanks for reading.

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