

**Dan Heintz: In Ohio, if your family isn't receiving a voucher, you're paying for a voucher.**

Daniel Heintz, a highly regarded teacher in one district and a school board member in his resident district, in a Cleveland.com guest column, suggests that Ohio's EdChoice voucher scheme may have dire political consequences for EdChoice voucher advocates.

Opinion

**[In Ohio, if your family isn't receiving a voucher, you're paying for a voucher: Dan Heintz](#)**

Published: Apr. 03, 2026, 5:39 a.m.

[Voucher expansion by income](#)

*A chart from a report by the nonpartisan research staff of the Ohio General Assembly shows many 35,000 upper-income families receiving private school scholarships. Ohio Legislative Service Commission*

By Guest Columnist, cleveland.com

A political storm is forming over the Buckeye State threatening to make landfall squarely on top of Ohio's EdChoice voucher program. "Old school" small-government Republicans are buddying up with a new breed of post-partisan anti-property tax activists to support a coalition of public school districts in what has been called the state's biggest taxpayer revolt in three decades. While public school supporters understand the importance of maintaining property taxes, this typhoon has the state's Republican Party loading up on bottled water and batteries.

Four years ago, a coalition of public school districts from around the state filed the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit. In a 47-page decision issued in July, Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Jaiza Page agreed, declaring the program to be unconstitutional based on three of the lawsuit's five claims. State Rep. Jamie Callender, a Concord Republican, recently introduced a bill to punish districts participating in the lawsuit. While it is almost certainly unconstitutional, Callender's bill (nicknamed by critics the "Public School Extortion Bill"), seems to signal a recognition that the forecast isn't good for EdChoice vouchers.

Landslide washes away road: Three families evacuated

The voucher lawsuit has always been popular in rural areas of Ohio, where fiscal conservatism, accountability to taxpayers and transparency are key pillars. Sending roughly a billion taxpayer dollars a year to unaccountable, nontransparent, and routinely underperforming private schools has been a bridge too far for these GOP stalwarts. July's court ruling seems to have caught the attention and support of those involved in the growing "Axe The Tax" movement as well.

Supporting a state constitutional amendment banning property taxes altogether, many of these activists have co-opted language from the 1997 DeRolph v. State of Ohio decision. The DeRolph case was directed by the same group managing today's Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit. In the DeRolph case, the majority Republican Ohio Supreme Court declared the state's funding system to be unconstitutional because of its "overreliance on the tax base of individual school districts."

Even a cursory look through "Axe the Tax"-related social media exposes a big problem for Ohio's ruling party -- these voters have had enough. The flurry of end-of-the-year tax-related legislation sent to Gov. Mike DeWine's desk seems to have backfired. Voters recognize that the General Assembly knows exactly what these voters wanted done, and have shown a refusal to do it.

You don't need an almanac to predict which way the political wind will blow in the coming statewide races. Last November's election results tell all you need to know. With a majority of school levies passing, Ohioans love their great local schools. And with many "Moms For Liberty"-styled culture warriors losing in

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competitive elections for local boards of education, Ohioans want an end to foolish distractions preempting the important work of our school boards.

Allowing a billion dollars a year of taxpayer money to be hijacked by the unconstitutional EdChoice voucher program will be hard for GOP legislative candidates in November. Too many of the voters they rely on have recognized the dirty truth of EdChoice: If your family is not receiving a voucher, your family is paying for a voucher. But their losses are likely to spread beyond the General Assembly. In 2021, the GOP controlled legislature demanded that party affiliation be added to State Supreme Court races. At the time, that must have seemed like a good idea, but with the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit destined for a hearing before that court, this decision may not end well for the Republicans.

Heintz is a public school teacher, a member of the Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education, and a member of the Steering Committee for the Vouchers Hurt Ohio Lawsuit.