

Budget Expected: **New ESA Voucher Expansion Effort Under Way: Help Fight!**

Budget Week is here! Bills are expected to drop Monday reflecting agreements between Majority (Republican) leadership and the governor. However, there may not be the votes to pass that agreement. If lawmakers can't make a deal this week, they may adjourn without passing anything and call a special session for the budget by July 1, the start of the next fiscal year.

Meanwhile, some lawmakers are trying to sneak through yet another way to expand ESA vouchers – this time to pay for children to go to private, religious schools in other states. This spring, the Department of Education found 9 families illegally using ESA vouchers at a school in New Mexico and terminated them from the program. Now, instead of finding existing solutions, lawmakers have vowed to rewrite the law. This would make Arizona the first state in the nation to allow tax dollars to be used at out-of-state private, religious schools.

It's a typical maneuver out of the school-choice playbook: find a sympathetic population to exploit, crack the door open with a new law, then repeat the process until Arizona taxpayers are left with crumbling public schools, a massive teacher shortage, and rock-bottom student spending, all so that our tax dollars can subsidize out-of-state private and religious schools. Lawmakers could help these nine families without also expanding vouchers, but that doesn't placate their national donors, who want expansion at any cost.

What can you do? This latest attempt to disrespect voters is utterly unacceptable. Please [share this article](#) and call lawmakers to make it clear that we want them to fund Arizona's public schools, not private school vouchers in other states.

While this latest attack on taxpayers is our biggest priority, here's a recap of bills we're watching:

- ▶ **SB1451** has gone back to the Senate for a final vote. An amendment added in the House to give the Attorney General sole authority to write descriptions for ballot measures is facing major opposition in the Senate. We're hearing the bill will likely be further amended to remove this provision.
- ▶ **SB1485**, to cap the growth of private school tax credits, is ready for a final House vote, but is being held for budget leverage. It's especially important that this bill move soon, because once the legislature adjourns, the bill will die, and Arizona will have to wait another year to cap the snowballing growth of these tax expenditures. Please contact House Speaker Bowers and Governor Ducey to ask them to pass SB1485 [this week](#).

And here's what we're looking to see in the budget:

- ▶ Increased funding of at least \$100 million above and beyond the \$68 million in the governor's January proposal for District Additional Assistance (basic essentials like textbooks, computers, building maintenance and bus repairs)
- ▶ Increased funding of at least \$20 million for school districts' choice of counselors, social workers, or security officers
- ▶ Fulfillment of the next 5% of the Governor's 2018 "20x2020" teacher pay raise plan
- ▶ Passage of Senate Bill 1485, the phased rollback of STO growth (private school tax credits)
- ▶ Absolutely ZERO ESA voucher shenanigans

These figures don't get Arizona out of the trenches and they mean we have much more still to do, but they do represent a good step toward making our state stronger, smarter, more equitable and more competitive. It's what Arizonans want and it's what our lawmakers were elected to do!



Arizona lawmakers considering using taxpayer money to pay for out-of-state private schools

The Arizona Legislature is considering allowing taxpayer money to be used for private-school tuition outside the state through its Empowerment Scholarship Account program.

Calls to Action!

✘ Oppose ESA Voucher Expansion (Bill numbers TBA)

The graphic is a red rectangular box with white and yellow text. At the top, there are icons for Twitter, a smartphone, the SOS ARIZONA logo, an envelope, and a telephone. The main text reads: "URGENT CALL TO ACTION" in large yellow letters, followed by "They are at it AGAIN!! Exploiting AZ kids and taxpayers to expand their agenda" in white. To the right is a photo of a woman in a red "SAVE OUR SCHOOLS" t-shirt. Below the photo, it says "Tell Gov. Ducey, Sen. Fann, & Rep. Bowers" and lists the hashtags "#RespectAZVoters" and "#NoNewVouchers". At the bottom, it provides contact information for Gov. Ducey, Rep. Bowers, and Sen. Fann, including phone numbers and Twitter handles.

URGENT CALL TO ACTION

They are at it AGAIN!!
Exploiting AZ kids
and taxpayers to
expand their agenda

Tell Gov. Ducey, Sen. Fann, & Rep. Bowers
#RespectAZVoters #NoNewVouchers

Gov. Ducey
602-542-4331
@douglucey

Rep. Bowers
602-926-3128

Sen. Fann
602-926-5874
@FannKfann

✔ Support SB1485

Contact the governor and ask him to allow SB1485 to be heard on the House floor:

- This bill offers a more responsible use of tax dollars
- By keeping these funds in the budget, the state can better support its many priorities, including public education
- There is wide bipartisan agreement on the merits of this bill
- Our state can't wait another year to slow the runaway growth of these tax expenditures

BILL WATCH LIST + STATUS as of May 19

Many of these are identical, also called "mirror," bills (marked with 🔄). This process, known as "fast-tracking," involves hearing identical bills in committee in each chamber, then substituting them for each other when it's time for a floor vote. (SOSAZ longtimers will recognize this as the process used in 2017 to advance SB1431, the bill that became Prop 305.)

SB1149	(S/E: student suspension; admission) Waiting for House COW
SB1230	(extraordinary special education needs fund) Waiting for House Rules
SB1349	(family college savings program) Passed Senate final read, on Gov's desk
SB1451	(statewide ballot measures; circulators; procedures) Needs conference committee
SB1485	(school tuition organization; inflator) Waiting for House 3rd read
SCR1023	(initiative; referendum; signatures; legislative districts) 🔄 Waiting for Senate COW
HCR2005	(initiative; referendum; signatures; legislative districts) 🔄 Waiting for House caucus
SB1080	(TPT; use tax; education) 🔄 Waiting for Senate 3rd read
HB2563	(education funding; use tax; TPT) 🔄 Waiting for House caucus
SCR1011	(TPT; use tax; education) 🔄 Waiting for Senate 3rd read
HCR2024	(TPT and use tax; education) 🔄 Waiting for House Rules

Join Us for the Budget Hearings

Please join us in the House and Senate Galleries to hold our representatives accountable
- We want them to #FundOurSchools and pass #NoNewVouchers



Monday, House 1 pm, Senate 1:30 pm

(Remainder of week is TBD)

[Here's how to get there and where to park](#)

Times Subject to Change

SB 1149



Oppose

Tax Credit Review; Evaluation Standard

Striker to Allow Discriminatory Admission Policies for Districts

Sen. Rick Gray

SB1149 is now subject to a *striker* from John Allen that would permit a district to refuse to admit a pupil who is currently or in the process of being suspended from another school.

[Kids of color](#), kids with special needs, and kids with emotional differences are already suspended at [statistically much higher rates](#). Welcoming and serving every child is a fundamental value of public education. Even children with challenges have a right to public education (and appropriate counseling/developmental services and supports) that help them succeed.

Public schools should never turn their back on Arizona's children. Ready for House COW.

public district and charter schools that serve students with extraordinary special education needs.

Arizona's exceptional-needs fund has remained dormant for years because lawmakers swept funding and never restored it. It would help small districts cover the high cost of educating one or two high-need students.

Currently, many schools must dip into their general classroom funds to fund special services, cutting into regular education needs such as class sizes, support staff, and salaries. Schools could apply for multiple grants with a maximum of \$200,000 per school year.

SB 1349



Oppose

Family College Savings Program Allows College Savings Accounts to Be Spent on Private K-12 School Tuition

Sen. David Livingston

Would create a new way to keep tax dollars out of the state's general fund by encouraging Arizona families to spend their 529 savings on K-12 private school tuition and expenses (up to \$10,000 per account per year!) instead of saving for college, as the accounts are intended.

Tuition at Arizona universities has more than doubled over the last 10 years, making this a fiscally irresponsible solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

Families have many options for supplementing K-12 private school tuition and expenses, but SB1349 encourages

SB 1230



Support

Extraordinary Special Education Needs Fund

Appropriates \$5 Million to Fund Special Education Grants for Public Schools

Sen. Sylvia Allen

Would appropriate \$5 million for grants from the Department of Education to

them to accumulate college debt, a far bigger burden on the buying power of young families. Ready for Senate final read.

SB 1451



Oppose

**Statewide Ballot Measures;
Circulators; Procedures
Creates Higher Hurdles for
Statewide Ballot Measures**
Sen. Vince Leach

Would require all petitions for statewide initiatives and referenda to be organized and grouped by circulator. This is an extra burden on campaigns, especially grassroots campaigns.

It also makes it easier for opponents to disqualify entire signature sheets. This would mean campaigns need even more signatures as a cushion, further raising the already high cost of putting measures on the ballot. This is a direct attack on citizen efforts like our No on Prop 305!

veto measures that have broad support.

See mirror bill [HCR2005](#), sponsored by John Kavanaugh.

HCR 2005



Oppose

**Initiative; Referendum;
Signatures; Legislative Districts
Require Ballot Measures to
Collect Signatures in All Districts**
Rep. John Kavanaugh

Would essentially doom the citizen initiative process in Arizona, especially for grassroots groups like SOSAZ.

It [restricts Arizona's initiative process](#) by requiring ballot measures to collect signatures from a percentage of voters in each of Arizona's 30 legislative districts: 10% for initiatives and 15% for a constitutional amendment. This would effectively give any single legislative district veto powers over the rest, allowing a small minority (the most conservative or liberal area in the state) to veto measures that have broad support. See mirror bill [SCR1023](#), sponsored by Sine Kerr.

SCR 1023



Oppose

**Initiative; Referendum;
Signatures; Legislative Districts
Undermines Arizona's Citizen
Initiative Process**
Sen. Sine Kerr

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SB 1485



Support

**Technical Correction; Tax
Correction
Striker Capping STO Growth**
Sen. JD Mesnard

SB1485 now contains a *striker* that would end the 20% annual automatic growth of corporate private school tax credits (STOs) by gradually decreasing the cap to 2% or inflation over the next 5 years.

Over the next 5 years the bill would keep up to [\\$263 million in the general fund](#) that would otherwise be diverted to private schools. Slowing the growth of this tax credit is critical, as it is on pace to [double every four years](#) unless state lawmakers take action.