



**SAVE OUR  
SCHOOLS**

Strong Schools,  
Strong State

## FACT SHEET

### Who We Are

Save Our Schools Arizona is a statewide, volunteer group of parents, teachers, entrepreneurs and business leaders. We are Democrats, Republicans, and independents who recognize that it takes better funding, strong schools, and a robust economy to have a strong state.

We are seeking to refer SB1431 – the ESA (voucher) expansion bill – to the voters of Arizona in 2018 so they can vote NO on this irresponsible expansion of vouchers and send a strong message to the legislators who undercut Arizona’s education and our economy.

### What We Know

**Strong Schools = Safe Neighborhoods:** Quality, well funded schools help protect property values and reduce crime. We need to invest in public education to protect our quality of life.

**Strong Schools = Strong Workforce.** We need to support our schools’ efforts to educate our children and develop a quality, competitive workforce to insure our state’s long-term success. An “under-educated workforce” is consistently cited as the #1 reason businesses avoid Arizona.

**Strong Schools = Good jobs and Economic Opportunities.** We need highly skilled and trained workers to attract jobs and economic opportunities to Arizona so that our state can compete in the industries of today and tomorrow. Businesses look for community support, quality of life, and education opportunities for their employees’ families.

**Better Funding = Better Results.** Vouchers take money out of our already-underfunded public school system. 90% of children are in public schools in Arizona, yet we rank 48<sup>th</sup> for how we fund public schools. Despite starving the schools and teachers that educate the vast majority of our students, Arizona has some of the best public schools in the nation. Arizona ranks dead last in the nation for teacher pay. We are in an unprecedented teacher shortage with more than 2,200 classrooms without a permanent teacher.

**More Handouts = Less Accountability.** This expansion bill requires almost no reporting from voucher recipients, whether they’re for-profit schools or individual families, on where the money goes, how it’s spent, or what educational outcomes are.

### What We Need

**Signatures!** We need 76,000 valid signatures by July 31. We are relying on volunteers to circulate petitions and host “Stop by and Sign” events. To volunteer, visit [www.SOSArizona.org](http://www.SOSArizona.org).

**Funding!** We need help covering our costs and are relying on individual donations. To donate, visit [www.SOSArizona.org](http://www.SOSArizona.org).



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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### CLASSROOM CRISIS

- Arizona ranks dead last in the nation for teacher pay. (Source: [Arizona Republic](#))
- Our state ranks 48th for public school funding and in student achievement outcomes (Source: [KTAR](#))
- Arizona is facing an unprecedented teacher shortage. Currently, more than 2,200 classrooms across the state without a teacher. (Source: [Arizona School Personnel Administrators Association survey, September 2016](#))
- Low teacher pay remains central to the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. (Source: [Arizona Education News](#))
- Vouchers pull millions from our already underfunded public schools, worsening the classroom crisis. (Source: [Arizona Republic](#))

### VOUCHERS ARE BAD FOR BUSINESSES

- A well-educated workforce is key to state prosperity. States that increase the level of education of their workforce experience higher overall wages. (Source: [Economic Policy Institute](#))
- Strong public schools, especially, are a central factor. Economists have found a significant financial payoff for states who invest in improving the quality of K-12 public education. (Source: [The Atlantic](#))
- “Undereducated workforce” is consistently cited as the number 1 reason businesses avoid locating in Arizona. (Source: [Morrison Institute](#))
- Businesses say communication skills and ability to work with others is the top challenge they face with new employees. Promoting homogenous private and insular home schooling does little to teach Arizona students to communicate across cultural divides and work in teams with people of other cultures and lifestyles. (Source: [Fast Company](#))



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- When schools close or fall into disrepair due to enrollment and funding cuts, this decreases the value of the entire neighborhood causing home values to plummet, crime to increase, and local economy to struggle. Shuttered campuses become havens for crime. (Source: [Washington Post](#))

## VOUCHERS ROB FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- The expanded voucher program is expected to redirect millions in taxpayer funds from the public education budget to any Arizona family to pay for K-12 private school tuition, (including religious schools) online school, or even home schooling. (Source: [Arizona Republic](#))
- Vouchers take money away from our already underfunded schools. Adequate funding for public schools is crucial to success. (Source: [Network for Public Education](#))
- 95% of Arizona families choose public schools. (Source: [Ballotpedia](#)) Arizona must invest in these families to succeed.

## CONSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS

- Vouchers allow public tax dollars to be redirected to religious schools, which are not required to report what they teach. (Source: [Americans United for Separation of Church and State](#))
- School voucher programs are regularly challenged in court for using taxpayer dollars to promote religious doctrine, thus violating the Equal Protection clauses of the U.S. Constitution. (Source: [ACLU](#))
- The Arizona Constitution provides an additional layer of protection above and beyond the U.S. Constitution. Unlike in many states, it specifically mandates a “general and uniform public school system” as the duty of the state. (Source: [Arizona Constitution, Article XI, Section 1](#))
- Arizona’s Constitution also clearly states that public funds must remain separate from religion: “No public money or property shall be appropriated for or applied to any religious worship, exercise, or instruction, or to the support of any religious establishment.” (Source: [Arizona Constitution, Article II, Section 12](#))



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## VOUCHERS ARE UNETHICAL

- Poorer families are less likely to be able to use ESAs, since vouchers don't cover most private school costs. They mostly benefit rich families who use the vouchers to reduce tuition they were already paying. (Source: [Arizona Republic](#))
- Vouchers are issued on a "first come, first served" basis. Current voucher recipients, especially children with disabilities and foster children, will now have to "get in line" for assistance along with newly-approved rich families using vouchers not out of need, but just to subsidize private school tuition they were already paying. This means children who really need specialized education may be cut out of services they desperately need. (Source: [Arizona Republic](#))
- SB1431 was designed with very little regulation and reporting requirements in terms of what children are learning, how they are keeping up with state and national standards, and how the money is being spent. Already, the much-smaller voucher system has been prone to fraud, with hundreds of thousands of dollars unaccounted for and student achievement rates untraceable. (Source: [Arizona Republic](#))
- Families who accept these vouchers must sign away numerous rights of privacy and legal protections. Because families are entering into private contracts, the state has no recourse to protect children in private educational settings. (Source: [New York Times](#))



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