



# UNPACKING GOV. LEE'S VOUCHER SCAM (HB1/SB1):



## WHAT IS AN EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT (VOUCHER)?

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) are a type of school voucher program which place public funding in an account for parents to use for private schools. Through becoming "universal vouchers" policymakers expand ESA accessibility by increasing the amount of funding and loosening eligibility requirements so that individuals **regardless of income level** can access them.



### HOW MUCH WILL GOV. LEE'S VOUCHER SCAM COST?

HB1/SB1 is suggesting a \$7,075 voucher for students to use on education expenses at a private school. In the first year, 20,000 vouchers will be awarded to students. (The first 10,000 based on "priority," and the last 10,000 to whoever wants them.) TN plans to expand by 5,000 each year of the program.

**In the first year alone, this will cost Tennessee taxpayers \$144M.**

**By year five, this will cost Tennessee taxpayers nearly \$800M.**

In Arizona, vouchers have caused the entire state to fall in a **\$1B deficit** - impacting schools, water supplies, fire departments, etc.



### HOW WILL THIS IMPACT OUR STUDENTS?

- **Students with disabilities would be required to give up their right to an IEP and due process to receive a voucher.**
- **Rural districts rely the most on state funding.** Losing students or money to vouchers can have an even harsher impact in rural communities that are already spread thin. This could lead to loss of staff, programming, or whole school districts.
- **Student performance doesn't increase with voucher schemes.** In fact, participants in Tennessee's current ESA program performed *below* their public school peers.
- **Even with a voucher, private school tuition is still largely inaccessible for working class families.** The average cost of private school tuition in Tennessee is about \$12K a year.



### WHAT ARE THE BRIBES THEY ARE ATTACHING TO VOUCHERS?

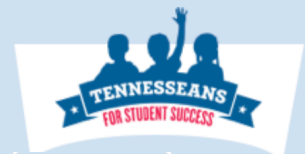
- **One-time \$2000 Teacher Bonus** (subject to appropriations)
- **80% of sports gambling funds appropriated to cover infrastructure needs of rural districts and districts impacted by natural disasters** (which previously were used for higher education funding)
- **Unfair "accountability"** that allows voucher recipients take the TCAP or a nationally-normed test in grades 3-11. Private schools would not be accountable to the third grade retention law or A-F grading scale.
- **Unclear "hold harmless" provision** that would fund districts for the students who leave due to vouchers from one year to the next. Legislators can't agree if this is for one year or in perpetuity.

## WHO ARE THE BILLIONAIRES FUNDING THIS PUSH FOR VOUCHERS?

According to a *Tennessee Lookout* report, billionaire-funded PACs poured \$4.5M into our state elections in order to elect pro-voucher candidates. Groups like Americans for Prosperity and American Federation for Children have also poured a ton of money into advertisements, canvassing, and more to push this scheme that will dismantle public education .

Top billionaires funding this voucher scheme in Tennessee and across the country are: Jeff Yass, Betsy DeVos, Charles Koch, Bill Gates, the Walton family, and Mike Bloomberg.

**In short -- NOT ordinary Tennesseans.**





# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STOP THE VOUCHER SCAM (HB1/SB1):



**IN 2024, ORDINARY PEOPLE ACROSS THE STATE RESOUNDLY DEFEATED THE VOUCHER SCAM.**

72+ school districts and local governments passed resolutions opposing Gov. Lee's voucher scam in 2024. From Memphis to Mountain city, ordinary folks called, emailed, marched, and lobbied to defeat the voucher scam and won.

**Gov. Lee is tying this voucher scam to hurricane relief in a special session, because he knows that vouchers can't stand on their own. Don't take the bribe.**

## CALL.

One of the most effective ways to be heard is to call your Senator and Representative directly. Filling up their messages and voicemail sends a clear message that their constituents do **not** support voucher schemes - no matter the bribes attached.

**Use our online guide/call script to help you!**

## EMAIL.

After you call, follow up with an email to your representative to let them know you want them to vote no on HB1/SB1.

Change the subject line to increase the likelihood of a response, and increase your impact by following up with some good old-fashioned snail mail.

**We've made emailing and sending letters easy with our action link + postcard template!**

## ACT LOCALLY.

If your county commission or school board hasn't passed a resolution on vouchers, make a public comment at the next meeting or contact them!

We also host trainings every month online that you can join to grow the Public School Strong movement in your county.

**Check our [linktr.ee](https://linktr.ee) for trainings and an email link for your local county commission.**

## SPREAD THE WORD.

Whether you live in an urban, suburban, or rural county - we all have a lot at stake to protect our public schools. After you take action, invite 5 of your neighbors to take action with you. We can defeat this voucher scheme when we work together.

**FIND ALL OF OUR ACTION LINKS AT [HTTPS://LINKTR.EE/SOCMPUBLICED](https://linktr.ee/socmpubliced)**

