



FOR RELEASE | May 16, 2024

Nebraskans urged to sign petition to support public schools

Voter rights & public school supporters: “Don’t let politicians deny your right to vote!”

LINCOLN, NE – Nebraska Secretary of State Bob Evnen today announced he will not honor the successful referendum petition to let Nebraskans vote on whether to repeal LB753’s private school tax scheme that diverts public funds to pay for private schools because a new legislative act on the issue was passed this year. Last summer, more than 117,000 Nebraskans signed a petition to let voters decide whether to use taxpayer dollars to fund private schools. The repeal of LB753 was to be on the November 2024 ballot.

Ignoring the will of the voters, State Sen. Lou Ann Linehan pushed to passage LB1402, a new taxpayer-funded voucher scheme to pay for private schools. Linehan admitted that she introduced LB1402 to deny Nebraska voters their right to vote on the issue, calling her bill an “end-run” around the successful petition drive.

“This is exactly why we’re asking voters to sign the new petition to put LB1402 on the ballot – it is critically important that Nebraskans protect their voice – their right to vote on this issue,” said Jenni Benson, a Support Our Schools Nebraska sponsor. **“We cannot allow politicians to impose this costly private school voucher scheme on taxpayers while denying Nebraskans the right to vote on the issue.”**

Support Our Schools Nebraska, a coalition of organizations that led last summer’s petition drive, launched a new effort in April to put this latest voucher scheme on the November ballot.

“We are working all across the state, asking Nebraskans to sign the Support Our Schools petition to let the people speak on this issue at the ballot box in November,” Benson said. “LB1402 is a slap in the face to Nebraska voters who have made clear that they want to decide whether to use taxpayer dollars to pay for private schools.

“It was a shameful, cowardly act by the senators who voted for LB1402 – and we cannot let this stand,” said Benson.

“There is a reason Nebraska is one of the last states to pass a voucher scheme. It’s called Nebraska Common Sense. Nebraskans know that voucher schemes wreak havoc on taxpayers and will hurt our local public schools, which serve 90% of all students in the state.

“Surveys consistently show that Nebraskans do not support using public funds to pay for private schools. The LB1402 voucher scheme initially costs \$10 million and, as has happened in other states, it will balloon in its cost to taxpayers. Iowa’s voucher scheme, which passed just last year, is now costing Iowa taxpayers \$128 million and is estimated to increase in costs to \$345 million annually. Arizona’s voucher scheme is also a fiscal fiasco, where the cost to taxpayers has ballooned to \$950 Million a year,” said Benson.

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs said her state’s voucher program *“lacks accountability and will likely bankrupt the state... It does not save taxpayers money, and it does not provide a better education for Arizona students.”*

“Working together, we will continue the fight against using public funds to pay for private schools and to ensure voters’ wishes on this issue are heard and respected,” said Benson.

“We have only 61 days left to collect 90,000 signatures to put this issue on the ballot,” said Benson. “This is a clarion call asking voters to seek out and sign the Support Our Schools petition to protect Nebraskans’ right to vote on this issue and to protect our public schools.”

“People are appalled that LB1402 was passed to deny Nebraskans their right to vote,” said Benson. “It is a fundamental principle of our democracy that the voice of the people must be heard. The decision to divert public funds to pay for private schools that are not accountable to the public and can discriminate against children should be made by Nebraska voters.”

“There is substantial evidence from other states showing the harm these costly voucher programs cause public schools and taxpayers. Vouchers undermine strong public education and student opportunity. They take scarce funding from public schools—which serve 90 percent of students—and give it to private schools—institutions that are not accountable to taxpayers,” said Benson. “Instead of sending public dollars to private schools, which are under no obligation to serve all children, state funds should be used to support the public schools that 9 out of 10 Nebraska students attend.

For more information – including where you can find a petition to sign, how to volunteer or to donate to the cause, please visit: <https://supportourschoolsnebraska.org/>

- **List and Map of Signing Events:** <https://supportourschoolsnebraska.org/sign-a-petition>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/SOSNebraska>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/SOSNebraska/>
- **Twitter/X:** <https://twitter.com/SOSNebraska>

FIND PETITION-SIGNING LOCATIONS/OPPORTUNITIES AT: <https://supportourschoolsnebraska.org/sign-a-petition>

Contact: Karen Kilgarin at 402-432-7776 or Kelsey Foley at 308-643-7268