

Voters YES-Vouchers NO

Tom Moscovic-Legislative Chair

Voters in Ohio reject Issue 1 that would have made it tougher to change constitution

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio voters on Tuesday resoundingly rejected a Republican-backed measure that would have made it more difficult to change the state's constitution, setting up a fall campaign that will become the nation's latest referendum on abortion rights since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned nationwide protections last year.

The defeat of Issue 1 keeps in place a simple majority threshold for passing future constitutional amendments. It would have raised that to a 60% supermajority, which supporters said would protect the state's foundational document from outside interest groups.

While abortion was not directly on the special election ballot, the result marks the latest setback for Republicans in a conservative-leaning state who favor imposing tough restrictions on the procedure. Ohio Republicans placed the question on the summer ballot in hopes of undercutting a citizen initiative voters will decide in November that seeks to enshrine abortion rights in the state.

Dennis Willard, a spokesperson for the opposition campaign One Person One Vote, called Issue 1 a "deceptive power grab" that was intended to diminish the power of the state's voters.

"Tonight is a major victory for democracy in Ohio," Willard told a jubilant crowd at the opposition campaign's watch party. "The majority still rules in Ohio."

A major national group that opposes abortion rights, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, called the result "a sad day for Ohio" while criticizing the outside money that helped the opposition. In fact, both sides relied on national groups and individuals in their campaigns.

Other states where voters have considered abortion rights since last year's Supreme Court ruling have protected them, including in red states such as Kansas and Kentucky.

It'll cost tax billions of dollars,' Ohio budget impacts public school funding payers

DAYTON, Ohio ([WDTN](#)) — Ohio Governor Mike DeWine has signed the state's budget for the next two years into law, saying it focuses on new opportunities for jobs and economic development, education initiatives and support for mothers and children. The budget has raised the base pay for Ohio teachers from \$30,000 to \$35,000. Additionally, it has pledged more than one billion dollars to public education and draws new guidelines for the state's school voucher program.

However, the budget is leaving education leaders in the state divided on whether this plan is the best path forward.

Scott DiMauro, president of the Ohio Education Association, said that while there are pros to the new budget, such as \$500 million going towards public schools' baseline education, there are some questionable aspects as well.

"This was a mixed budget, but this expansion of vouchers to people, even including millionaires, really was something that puts a damper on the whole thing overall," Scott DiMauro of the Ohio Education Association said.

"You have to ask the question, why is it that people who have already been sending their kids to private schools need a subsidy from the state of Ohio, essentially a government handout to reward them for their choice?"

With the new Ohio budget, a family of four making \$135,000 a year qualifies for a full scholarship to a private or parochial school. That's 450 percent of the federal poverty level, according to the [Ohio Capital Journal](#).

Every student in the state will be eligible for a scholarship that pays at least 10 percent of the maximum scholarship, no matter what the family makes each year, which is something Dayton Christian School leaders say parents have been asking for and helps all students regardless of economic status.

"I don't think it's necessarily about rich or poor, because up to a couple of years ago, the focus of the voucher system was actually to get students out of low performing districts," Matt Baker, head school at Dayton Christian, said.

"Some of those in lower socio-economic areas into different entities that are performing higher. Now they've just expanded that, giving parents more opportunity, more choice to use their dollars where they see fit."

With the expansion of the voucher program, private schools say they are awaiting the full details on how this expansion will work and when exactly it will take effect.

Education Report

Final Ohio Budget Points Affecting Education

- OFT, NEA and Policy Matters Ohio praised increases in state funding which was a phase-in from the Fair School Funding Plan

- "Near" universal private school eligibility --\$135,000 for family of four

1. \$6,165 for K-8, \$8,407 for HS

2. Scholarships will be adjusted based on family income.

3. Senate Pres. Matt Huffman said, "Every student in Ohio will be eligible for a scholarship regardless of income."

4. Teacher's unions are worried that this is a voucher "scheme" that will give more \$ to private schools over time and less to public schools.

· School lunch program—districts will be reimbursed for free and reduced breakfasts and lunches as long as they are part of the National School Breakfast or Lunch Program

Ohio Department of Education Changes -October 1st

There are some changes coming to the Ohio Department of Education following the passage of House Bill 33. The first is a name change.

During the first week in October, the Department of Education will be renamed the Department of Education and Workforce and will become a cabinet-level agency reporting to the Governor of Ohio.

The Department of Education and Workforce will be responsible for primary, secondary and career-technical education in Ohio. The director will be appointed by the governor who will then appoint deputy directors.

“The restructuring of the Department is a great opportunity to expand its focus on student success by prioritizing workforce readiness while still advancing its [Future Forward Ohio](#) initiatives to help students recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic,” state leaders wrote on the Ohio Department of Education website.

The legislation also created a new agency called the Department of Children and Youth which is expected to provide more efficient services to children and families in the areas of prevention, early education and support.

The power and duties of the State Board of Education will be divided between the State Board of Education and the Department of Education and Workforce with the State Board in charge of the following:

Hire state superintendent of public instruction to serve as the executive officer of the State Board;

Adopt requirements for educator licensure;

Process and issue educator licenses;

Investigate and resolve educator misconduct complaints;

Evaluate background checks, evaluate eligibility for licensure and participate in the retained applicant fingerprint database program;

Determine school district territory transfer disputes;

Administer the teacher and school counselor evaluation systems;

Oversee the Ohio Teacher of the Year program; and

Interface with, and provide staff support to, the Educator Standards Board.

OEA Summary of Final Budget Bill

On July 3, 2023, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed House Bill 33, the state budget bill for Fiscal Years (FY) 2024 and 2025. OEA members, staff, and partners had been involved in the budget debate since the beginning of the year. And because of our combined advocacy, we were able to secure major gains in education funding and positive policy changes for public education, educators, and students in Ohio.

Because of our work to build a bloc of pro-public education, bi-partisan legislators in the Ohio House, the final budget bill contains the House-passed version of the Fair School Funding Plan. This version updates the base cost inputs to FY 2022 and continues years three and four of the phase in of the plan (this was OEA’s top budget priority for the 135th General Assembly). It is estimated that this will increase public education funding by nearly \$1 billion over the two-year period. We also were able to have an economically disadvantaged pupil cost study included in the final version of the bill. More details of the education funding changes are included in OEA’s summary of the as-passed version of HB 33.

Additionally, because of OEA member engagement and advocacy we were able to obtain the following positive public education policy changes:

The act increases the state minimum teacher salary from \$30,000 to \$35,000, creates a “Grow Your Own Teacher” program to help high need schools recruit and train qualified educators from their own staff and community, and makes other improvements to staff recruitment and retention policies.

The HB 33 conference committee removed the inclusion of Senate Bill 83, the Higher Education Destruction Act, from the final version of the bill.

The act returns local control to Lorain City Schools. OEA advocated also for the removal of Youngstown City Schools and East Cleveland City Schools from their academic distress commissions, however, this was not included in the final version of HB 33.

The act expands the free breakfast and lunch program to any student who qualifies for reduced meals, making major advances to combat childhood hunger.

And finally, after years of advocacy from OEA members across the state, the Ohio General Assembly included OEA's ask to end mandatory retention under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Parents and educators, not standardized test scores, will now determine whether a student should be retained or promoted under the program. Finally, the act provides for additional supports for students under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and creates a safe harbor provision allowing parents and educators to determine whether a student needs to be retained in the 2023-2024 school year.

These gains in funding and improvements to education policy were only possible because of the thousands of members who wrote letters to and called their elected officials, as well as the members who participated in OEA Lobby Days throughout this budget cycle.

We would be remiss not to mention that while the state budget contained many positive changes, the Ohio Senate was able to include provisions that OEA vocally opposed throughout the budget process. Namely, these include:

The expansion of the income based EdChoice voucher program to universal eligibility for K-12 students and provides reduced voucher amounts for families over 450% of poverty.

Senate Bill 1, which limits the role of the State Board of Education by shifting most of its powers and duties to a new cabinet agency named the Department of Education and Workforce.