

Lobby Call: May 27, 2025

Budget, New Bills, Calls to Action and More

136th General Assembly



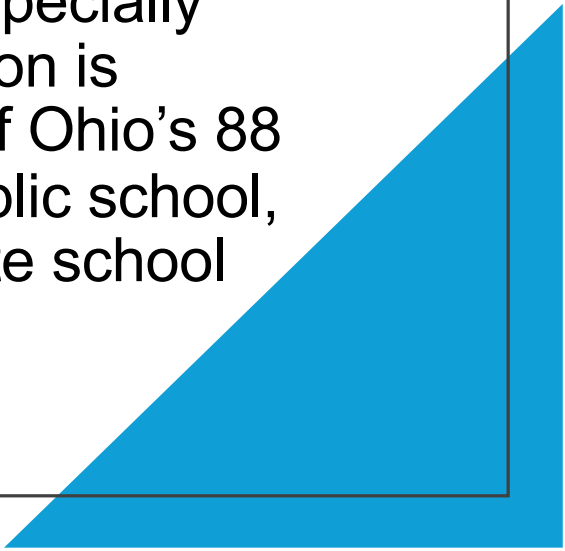


The Budget Process

Operations Budget and Fair School Funding

125,058	154,568	95,054	124,500
125,487	56,845	97,511	125,000
124,000	110,000	99,011	154,000
450	150,000	99,216	95,000
	35,000	101,090	154,200
		101,684	110,000
		101,962	89,000
			50,000
			700

The HB96, the Budget bill passed in the Ohio House, shortchanges all Ohio public schools, posing additional threats to Ohio's rural communities.

- The elimination of the Ohio Fair School Funding Plan and the imposition of a 30% cap on school reserves, both proposed in HB96, will hit rural communities especially hard. Public schools are the only place education is universally accessible to rural students: in 47 of Ohio's 88 counties, 95% or more of students attend a public school, and 10 Ohio counties don't have a single private school option; these are all rural counties.
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- A large blue triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.

Voucher expansion, concentrated in just 6 counties, forces rural districts to pay for privatized education they cannot access.

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While all public schools face challenges, our rural districts are confronted by the additional obstacles of inadequate broadband access, outdated infrastructure, more limited access to teachers and administrators trained in new technologies, and higher transportation costs. Rural communities also have less access to mental health and special education providers both in and out of schools. The smaller tax base of less populated communities means that our rural districts are likely to be hit the hardest if the Fair School Funding Plan is not restored in Ohio's budget.

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When public schools close, rural communities collapse.

- Small towns and heartland communities are living in uncertain times, and we need strong public schools in rural Ohio. It's now up to Ohio Senators to be the lifeline for working families, local economies, and communities across the Buckeye State.

Public Schools are everywhere, and welcome everyone.

- Public schools are a cornerstone of our democratic republic and a vibrant Ohio. The Ohio Senate must adopt the Fair School Funding Plan and eliminate the 30% cap.
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- **1) Include the Fair School Funding Plan in the state budget and complete the successful phase-in started four years ago: The Fair School Funding Plan:**
 - was passed and implemented with bipartisan support to finally fix decades of funding disparities;
 - works by taking the actual cost of educating kids and splitting it between the state and local communities according to how much those local communities can afford;
 - achieves equity and adequacy in public school funding when fully funded;
 - provides a constitutional funding solution to meet the needs of Ohio's diverse school districts and communities, and the students they serve;
 - takes into account the ability of rural districts to meet its share;
 - helps relieve rural property owners of unsustainable and unfair property tax burdens.

Bottom line: The Fair School Funding Plan must be restored and fully funded in the Senate Budget bill so that Ohio's children can thrive and all our communities can prosper.

- **2) Remove the 30% cap on carryover funds for school districts. Taking districts' ability to have cash reserves that go 30% or more beyond their operating costs:**
 - hurts long-term planning, preventing rural districts from being able to offer the facilities and programming that could keep families from leaving the community;
 - punishes fiscal discipline, forcing districts who have carefully saved taxpayer funds over time to abandon the projects they have been saving toward;
 - undermines local control;
 - forces districts to go back to the voters with property tax levies more frequently, increasing program instability;
 - does not solve the growing problem of property taxes, providing – at best – only a temporary solution.

Bottom line: The amendment mandating a 30% cap on carryover funds for local school districts must be removed from the budget bill so they can plan and make the budget decisions that best fit their communities.

The Ways We Are Advocating

- Every Senator received the research via email.
- First testimony – written – was submitted to Senate Education Committee.
- Team from Metro Columbus League visiting every Senate office; appointments made with aides.
- In person testimony: Ellen Price from Oxford League, Karen Leith from LWVO
- Rally: Tailgate for Rural Schools in partnership with the Farmers' Union

Metro Columbus: Visits to Senate Offices

- Planning
 - Working with Advocacy, research, approval of materials
- What was learned
 - Need to provide nonpartisan info, need to start earlier
 - Need to also educate public
 - Need to show local impacts
 - Work is intense and quick; timelines are short
- What was done
 - 17 aides
- What is still to be done



A faded background image showing a group of people, mostly women, sitting on folding chairs at an outdoor tailgate event. They are wearing casual clothing, and some are wearing hats. A red and white striped traffic barrel is visible in the foreground on the right. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Advocacy Day: Tailgate for Rural Schools: They Are the Heart of Our Communities

- LWVO and the Farmers Union are partners to bring the necessary rural voice to the statehouse
- **Wednesday, May 28, 2025**
 - **Wear public school district spirit colors**
 - **Bring banners**
 - Noon – honk and wave
 - 12:30 PM – rally speakers
 - 1PM +: visit offices to talk and drop off packets

Rally Lit Drop: Base Messages

- Policy sheet with the two asks.
 - **Bottom line:** The Fair School Funding Plan must be restored and fully funded in the Senate Budget bill so that Ohio's children can thrive and all our communities can prosper.
 - **Bottom line:** The amendment mandating a 30% cap on carryover funds for local school districts must be removed from the budget bill so they can plan and make the budget decisions that best fit their communities.

Support the Rally with your own emails to your Senators.



What We Know of Schedule

- Week of May 26
 - **Full Senate Finance Committee**
 - **Public testimony every day**
 - **T, W, Th at 9 AM**
 - **F at 1:30**
 - **In-person was due last Friday by 5**
 - **Can still submit written only testimony**
- Expected omnibus amendments: June 6
- Followed by passing committee and floor vote no later than week of June 9th
- Conference Committee mid June – June 25
 - Need concurrence in both Chambers by June 25
- Governor needs to sign it by June 30

What You Can Do: LTEs, Visits

1. Find out the facts for your district. Write a LTE. Write an email to your Senator.
2. We need Leagues to call their Senators. Keep the emails and calls going. Use the unified message. Focus on strong public schools. If you have a story, tell it.
3. Get your local school board to pass a resolution in support of fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan:
[Resolution template from Honesty for Ohio Education](#)


Resources

- Local Media

- House Members Contact Info . Senate Members Contact Info
• House Committees Information Senate Committees Information
- Toolkit of general points for LTEs (also includes local media)
- Ohio Fair School Funding Plan — Actions to Take (Finance committee and Rural Senators contact info)
- Education Options by County: Data & Maps (Susie Kaeser Research – LWVO)
- See how the House plan would hurt your district. (Policy Matters Ohio)
- Executive Summary: K-12 Landscape (LWVO Kaeser)
- Report: The K-12 Education Landscape in Ohio (LWVO Kaeser)
- Funding Public Education in the State Budget: HB 96 (full toolkit on ed funding and the budget)
- History of School Funding in Ohio (including vouchers) (LWVO Kaeser)

More Resources

- [House Members Contact Info](#) . [Senate Members Contact Info](#)
- [House Committees Information](#) [Senate Committees Information](#)
- Slides from the Ohio League of Women Voters February 12, 2025 webinar explaining the details and background of the Fair School Funding Plan. ([link to slides](#)) Here is a recording of the webinar ([link to recording](#))
- [History of School Funding in Ohio \(including vouchers\)](#) (LWVO Kaeser)
- [Helpful Blog from Jan Ressenger: FSFP, Vouchers and More in the Budget](#)
- Policy Matters Ohio's recent [voucher-mapping report](#)
- [Learn how vouchers harm public schools in your state House and Senate districts.](#)
- [House would scrap FSFP, underfund schools by \\$2.75 billion](#) ([Policy Matters Ohio](#))
- [Fair School Funding Explorer](#) (All in for Ohio's Kids)

A black and white photograph of the Illinois State Capitol building, a large neoclassical structure with a prominent dome and a portico supported by many columns. In the background, several modern skyscrapers are visible, including one with 'KeyBank' and 'CHASE' logos. The sky is cloudy.

In Other Business: Bills We Are Tracking

These Bills have been introduced and assigned to a committee. Many are getting 1st hearings from Sponsors. In a couple of cases, there are signs of fast tracking.

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SB153/HB233 Require citizenship verification before an elector may vote

- SB 153: Gavarone and Brenner
 - Committee: Senate General Government
 - Hearings: April 8 (Sponsor), 29 (Proponent)
3rd hearing, Tues., May 27 at 2 PM All testimony
- HB 233: LaRe and Swearingen
 - Committee: House General Government
 - Hearings: none to date

Oppose SB153/HB233

- Ohio Senate Bill 153 and Ohio House Bill 233 are a pair of radical, massive, and unnecessary election bills now in the Ohio General Assembly. Not only would these bills make it harder for statewide initiatives, local issues, and candidates to make it onto the ballot, these bills would make it harder for Ohioans to cast a ballot and would add unacceptable, unfunded burdens to local Boards of Elections.
- The power of the vote and the citizen initiatives are the strongest tools Ohioans have to push back on government overreach, hold politicians accountable, and allow us to play a real role in shaping policy in our communities. Once again, corrupt politicians are trying to limit the power of everyday Ohioans.
- To message the Ohio House and Senate Government Committees, your representatives, and leaders in both chambers, go [here](#).

Short Outline of Bill

To help educate our communities about the threat this bill represents, LWVO worked with our OVRRC partners to create [this messaging toolkit](#) to use for talking about this in your networks; this contains graphics and sample posts to use in your social media, talking points, resources for understanding the damage this anti-voter omnibus would do in Ohio if passed.

- Much more than just documentary proof of citizenship (DPOC).
 - Amends over 40 sections and creates 3 more in the Revised Code
- Unfunded mandates for the Boards of Elections (BOEs)
 - New mailings, more validation procedures, provisional ballot processing, new equipment, “routine” and daily reports, data maintenance
- Attacks on petition process
 - Increased legal jeopardy for petition committee members and circulators
 - More reasons to invalidate petitions making signature-collection more difficult
 - Requires “compensated” circulators to wear identifying badges
- Explodes provisional ballot usage
 - Anyone with mismatched BMV and voter registration data must vote provisionally
 - Anyone without DPOC (according to BMV records) must vote provisionally
- Failure to reply to mailed notices from the BOEs = potential prosecution
- Eliminates drop boxes

Talking Points

- OVRC messaging toolkit to use for talking about this in your networks; this contains graphics and sample posts to use in your social media, talking points, resources for understanding the damage this anti-voter omnibus would do in Ohio if passed— [here](#)
- 1-pager with an overview of SB153/HB233 and messaging guidance [here](#)
- List of the unfunded mandates impacting BOEs, plus an analysis by the Brennan Center [here](#)
- Text of SB153 and analysis from the Legislative Services Commission (LSC) [here](#) and [here](#)
- Text companion bill HB233 [here](#)
- Sign-up form to be notified with bill updates and to submit testimony when hearings begin [here](#)
- LTEs for inspiration [here](#) : we're adding to this as they are published, so please share with Elisabeth if yours appears in a local publication

More...

- **Fair Districts' organizational sign-on letter opposing SB153/HB233:** Our Fair Districts coalition has sent out requests to Ohio organizations to join us in a letter to all members of the Ohio General Assembly and Governor DeWine both formally opposing these anti-voter bills and laying out the reasons they would be so destructive to voters and elections in our state.
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- League leaders can read the letter and sign [here](#).

SB 1/ (HB 6) Enact Ohio Higher Education Enhancement Act

Net Steps:

1. **Collecting Stories as it is implemented:** Share this form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSexcBDPWGy2iEO6U4OL69Zy4EDf2y0AAx07GPGP4A-1Gvc1Og/viewform?usp=header> We need to find people who have been (or are about to be) directly harmed by SB 1

2. **Petition Drive:** <https://ohsb1petition.com>

- **Referendum update** — [certified to start collecting signatures statewide!](#)
 - **Where to sign the petition** — <https://ohsb1petition.softtr.app/>
 - This is a grassroots effort. Donations will be CRUCIAL.
 - [Donate here.](#)
 - Sign up to [volunteer here](#)
- Learn about the [referendum process here](#)
- **SB 1 bans all efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** which hurts children. Get involved. Gather signatures; Be a petition captain. Volunteer.
 - **May not do this as a League, but individuals are free to participate**
- Contact: ohsb1petition@gmail.com, [\(330\) 406-9490](tel:3304069490) Youngstown, OH

SB 63, Prohibit Ranked Choice Voting

Passed the Senate: May 14th (27-5)

Prohibits any election from being conducted in Ohio using ranked choice voting, also known as instant runoff voting.

- Allows a county or municipal corporation to use its home rule powers under the Ohio Constitution to adopt a ranked choice voting system, but financially penalizes a local government that does so.
- Makes a county or municipal corporation that approves the use of ranked choice voting via a resolution or ordinance ineligible to receive distributions from the Local Government Fund until it rescinds the resolution or ordinance.
- Provides procedures for the Secretary of State, the Tax Commissioner, and county treasurers to follow in enforcing the penalty.

Action at LWVO State Convention: **Action Resolutions**

Five Action Resolutions were passed:

- **Therefore, be it resolved** that the League of Women Voters of Ohio at The Bertram, in State Convention on May 18, 2025, urges the Ohio Senate and General Assembly complete the phase-in of a school funding strategy that is constitutional by making Fair School Funding the framework for public education spending in HB 96, using accurate cost data and appropriating sufficient funds so that taxpayers, communities and students are treated fairly. It's good for Ohio.
- **Therefore, be it resolved** that the League of Women Voters of Ohio at The Bertram, in State Convention on May 18, 2025, urges the Ohio Senate and General Assembly to reject any proposal to make the state board an appointed body.
- **Therefore, be it resolved** that the League of Women Voters of Ohio at The Bertram, in State Convention on May 18, 2025, urges the Ohio Senate and General Assembly to reject any proposal to create partisan elections for candidates in State Board of Education and local school district board of education races.
- **Therefore, be it resolved** that the League of Women Voters of Ohio meeting in Convention at The Bertram, on May 18, 2025, urges the Ohio Senate and General Assembly to protect all forms of direct democracy, including but not limited to citizen initiatives, referendums, and to protect Ohioans' right to vote.
- **Therefore, be it resolved** that the League of Women Voters of Ohio meeting in Convention at The Bertram, on May 18, 2025, urges Ohio General Assembly, Ohio Governor, and members of Congress to oppose any policies that suppress the rights of voters.

NEXT LOBBY CALL

June 10, 2025