

Lobby Call: March 11,
2025

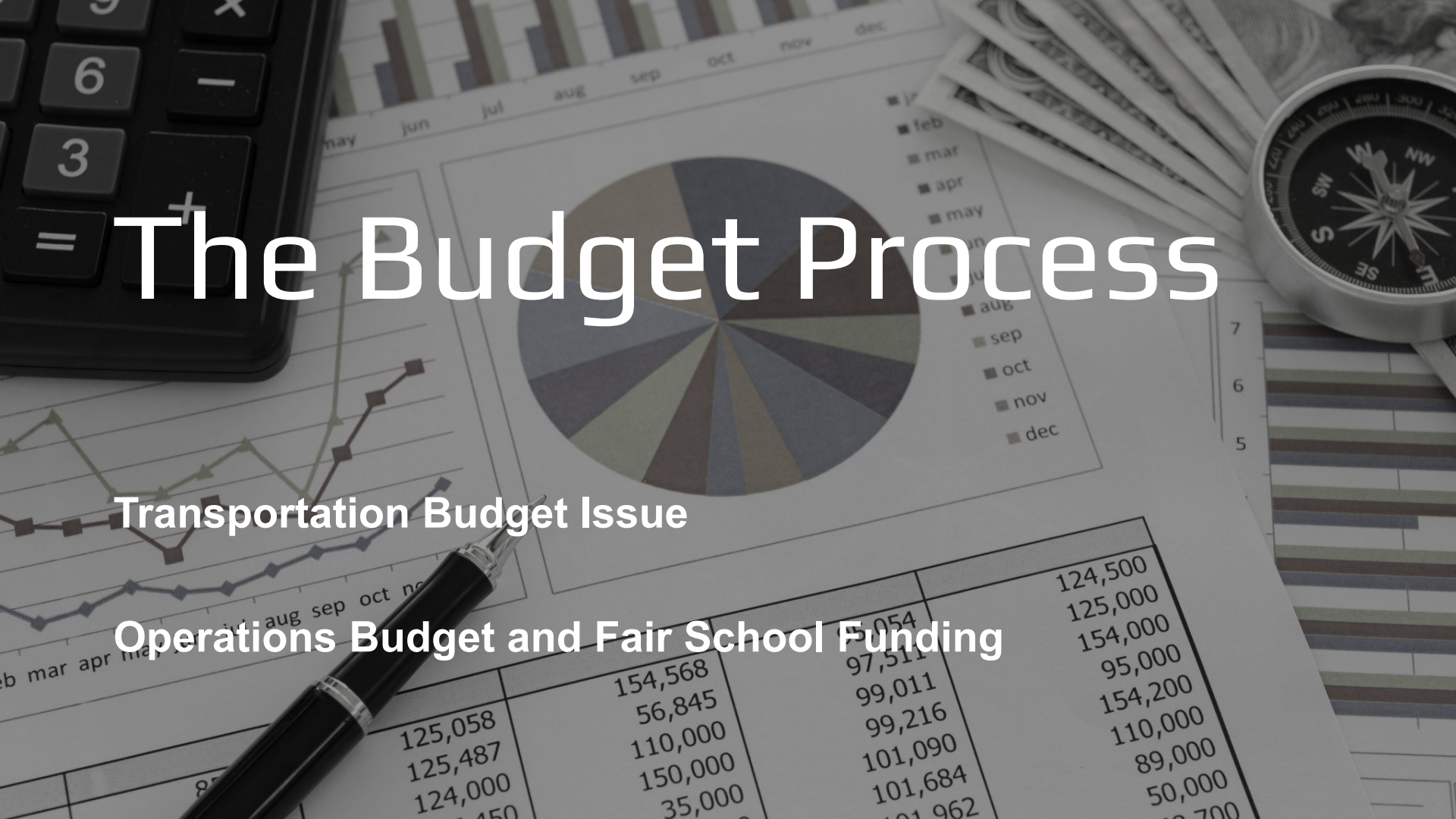
Budget, New Bills, Calls to Action and More

136th General
Assembly



Where to Find Information

- All Things Ohio General Assembly:
 - The Ohio Legislature
 - **Bill tracking tool on [Legislature.Ohio.gov](https://www.legislature.ohio.gov):**
 - This new tool allows you to track bills and receive updates on bills that interest you
 - Create a free account here:
<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/authentication/create-account>
- Legiscan
- OUR WEBSITE: www.lwvohio.org



The Budget Process

Transportation Budget Issue

Operations Budget and Fair School Funding

Update on Budgets

- **HB 54 Transportation Budget** has been passed by the House
 - All pieces about voter registration were removed
- Senate Transportation – Transportation Budget – Tues., Wed., Thurs., Fri.

HB 96 Operations:

- Now back with the full House Finance Committee (10:30 AM)
 - Tues.: 1st Hearing Sponsor Testimony
 - Wed.: 2nd Hearing Public Testimony
 - Thurs.: 3rd Hearing Public Testimony

HB 96:

Operations Budget

Where Are We Now?

- Tool Kit in two places on our website: Action Alerts and Education as a Current Issue.

HB 96: Operations Budget

Fair School Funding in the Budget

• Basic Tool Kit of Talking Points and Actions to Take

- Susie Kaeser's research with heat maps under Current Priorities: Education.
- We are coordinating with other groups with a unified message – it is the first three points that you find in the tool kit. We are going to continue to beat the drum, adding drummers as the bill goes through the GA.

OEPI INITIAL ANALYSIS OF EXECUTIVE BUDGET K-12 FUNDING PROPOSAL

Table 1: Comparison of Proposed FY26-27 Funding Changes for Traditional K-12, Districts, JVSDs, Community Schools and Ohio's 5 School Voucher Programs

	<u>FY25 to FY26 Change</u>	<u>FY26 to FY27 Change</u>	<u>Biennial Change FY25- FY27 Total¹</u>
Traditional Districts Foundation Formula	Reduction of \$31.6 million (-0.4%)	An additional reduction of - \$40.2 million (-0.5%)	\$103.4 million decrease from FY25 levels
Vouchers	Increase of \$88.6 million (8.2%)	An additional increase of \$88.2 million (7.6%)	\$265.4 million increase from FY25 levels
Community and STEM Schools	Increase of \$73.6 million (5.8%)	An additional increase of \$74.5 million (5.5%)	\$221.8 million increase from FY25 levels
JVSDs	Increase of \$43.6 million (8.8%)	An additional increase of \$29.1 million (5.4%)	\$116.3 million increase from FY25 levels
Traditional Districts "Add-ons" ²	Increase of \$45.3 million (15.9%)	An additional increase of \$13.6 million (4.1%)	\$104.3 million increase from FY25 levels

Important to Note

- **The above decreases in funding are NOT due to changes in school district enrollment as the LSC simulations hold enrollment constant in FY26 and FY27 at FY25 levels.**
- 68 districts (11%) gained enrollment between FY24 and FY25 but experience a net reduction in foundation formula funding compared to FY25.
- 61 (17.5%) of the 349 districts experiencing a net reduction in foundation funding in the FY26-27 biennium grew enrollment between FY24 and FY25.

Policy Matters Ohio (Info Sheet)

What we mean when we say Fully Fund the FSFP and why we need the qualifiers added on:

The legislature must finish the job with this budget. Here's how:

1. Fully phase in the plan. With the FSFP only 66% phased-in, Ohio schools are losing out on more than \$347M a year in foundation funding. Gov. DeWine's budget proposal includes the final two years of the phase-in. **The House and Senate should join the governor and fund the plan at 100%.**

2. Don't break the formula by using outdated costs. The formula works when it is based on both up-to-date costs and local revenue-raising capacity. In the last budget, legislators required that the formula incorporate annually updated property tax valuations but chose to throttle the cost components, pinning costs to 2022. Inflation and rising property values drove up the amount the state expected local communities to contribute to school funding but kept the cost of education stuck in 2022.

	2022	2025	2027
% phased in	50%	66.7%	100%
State funding	\$4.6B	\$4.5B	???

Ohio Education Policy Institute, Foundation Formula components based on ODEW School Finance Payment Reports.

Hopefully...

\$147M cut



The legislature can correct this by ensuring the local capacity to fund education and the costs of educating students are updated on the same schedule using current data.

- **Don't short change children who need more support.** The FSFP requires the state to send additional support to schools so they can address the additional needs of students with special education needs, English language learners, gifted students, and students in poverty. The FSFP requires the state to study how much it costs to ensure these students have their educational needs met. The state has completed several of these studies but has not incorporated the findings into the formula. **The legislature must also update these “categorical weights” — and fully fund them — to ensure all kids have what they need.**

Ohio's school funding formula will remain broken unless the legislature includes up-to-date cost estimates **and** categorical weights.

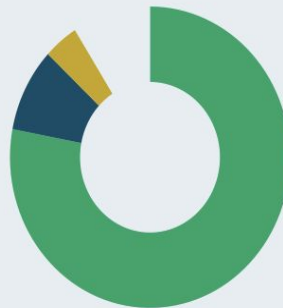
Statewide Foundation Funding



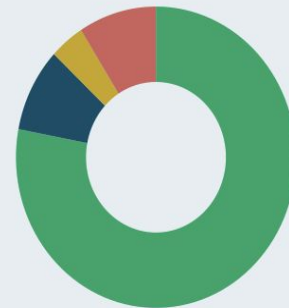
\$6,395,301,322
Funding without FSFP



+ \$694,241,335
Current funding
66% phase in



+ \$347,068,602
Funding with
full phase in



+ \$tbd
Funding with updated
inputs and full phase in

Short, Unified Message

To the Public: Ohio's public-school children, families, schools, and communities must come together to demand that lawmakers complete the promised phase-in of the Fair School Funding Plan, and based on accurate and up-to-date cost estimates fully fund the state's responsibility for high quality public education.

To the General Assembly: In order to fulfil the Ohio legislature's constitutional responsibility to fund a high quality education that is available throughout the state, we call upon the General Assembly to include in the FY26-27 operating budget funds sufficient to cover up-to-date costs of K-12 education, and fully fund the final phase-in of the Fair School Funding Plan.

Additionally, why LWVO Supports It:

- **The Fair School Funding plan is a solid funding strategy that when followed as designed, and fully funded, achieves equity and adequacy.** The formula is a constitutional solution to the vexing problem of meeting the needs of our extremely diverse school districts and communities, and the students they serve.
- **Public education has to be Ohio's K-12 funding priority. Ohio's public education system belongs to the public and serves the common good.** It is available everywhere and includes everyone; it is accountable to the public and locally elected school boards; it is regulated to ensure quality teaching and learning; and it respects the separation of church and state. Education choices outside the public system do not benefit everyone, are not accountable, are not required to be honest or true, and divert funds from the schools that are the cornerstone institutions in communities and our democracy.
- **Public school funding is a joint responsibility of the state and local communities. Local taxpayers have carried too much of the burden for too long, perpetuating inequality. The state needs to do its fair share and stop shifting that responsibility to local property taxes.**

Change in the State Share Percentage

- The current statewide average state share percentage in FY25 is 38.4%. The LSC simulations show that in FY26, the statewide average state percentage **decreases to 35.0%**. The LSC simulations also show that in FY27, the statewide average state percentage **decreases again to 32.2%**.
- **Prior years' share percentages:**
 - 2019 – 46%
 - 2022 – 42%
 - 2023 – 39.6%
 - 2024 – 42.35%

The Fair School Funding Plan was designed for all of the data to be updated annually so that the funding adequacy and state/local share sides of the formula work in tandem. The failure to update the input data used for the base cost calculation in parallel with the data used for the state/local share calculation has caused the decline in the state share which is the primary reason for the reductions in foundation formula funding for traditional districts seen in the Executive budget.

- The state's formula is complex, but there are two numbers to focus on: **local Property Tax Revenue** and **Cost Estimates**.
- By including increased local property-tax revenue and excluding three years of inflation, the legislature can call a \$140M funding cut an increase. They're hoping you won't do the math.

What You Can Do: LTEs, Visits

1. Find out the facts for your district. Write a LTE.
2. We need Leagues to visit their representatives. Bring allies with you.
3. Keep the emails and calls going. Use the unified message. Focus on strong public schools. If you have a story, tell it.
4. We have a target list of legislators. We are matching Leagues to that list.
5. If you know you are willing to visit a legislator, please email us at advocacy@lwvohio.org. We will help with materials, talking points, etc.



Costs, Capacity and Shared Responsibility:

Getting to the Heart

of Fair School Funding



Costs, Capacity and Shared Responsibility: Getting to the Heart of Fair School Funding

Wed Mar 12th 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Hosted by the League of Women Voters of Ohio

A conversation with Ohio Education Policy Institute's Howard Fleeter and Fair School Funding Plan architects John Patterson, Michael Hanlon, and Ryan Pendleton.

Presented by LWVO's Education Committee and moderated by Susie Kaeser.

[REGISTER](#)

New Policy Matters Ohio Tools

- See if your district is among the 349 that will see a funding cut.
- Policy Matters Ohio's recent [voucher-mapping report](#)
- Learn how vouchers harm public schools in your state House and Senate districts.



LWVOhio.org Resources

- Landscape map by Senate Districts
- Education Options by County: Data & Maps
- Executive Summary: K-12 Landscape
- Report: The K-12 Education Landscape in Ohio
- Funding Public Education in the State Budget: HB 96
- History of School Funding in Ohio (including vouchers)



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.

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

- Sponsor: Cirino in Senate/ Young in House
- **Brief description: like the original SB 83 from the 135th GA.**
- is a devastating higher education bill that would restrict the teaching of “controversial” subjects, ban most diversity policies and programs, place entire courses and departments at risk, gut workers’ rights, and much more.
- Bill Synopsis (thank you, AAUP!)

- **PASSED THE SENATE.**
- **House Committee: Today! Honesty has lined up opponent testimony.**

HB 28: Eliminate the authority to levy replacement property tax levies

- Sponsors: Matthew, A., Hall, T
- Committee: Ways and Means. Hearing: 1st Sponsor, Feb. 26; 2nd, Proponent, Mar. 4; 3rd, Opponent, Mar. 12
- Eliminates the authority of political subdivisions to levy replacement property tax levies, beginning with elections held on or after October 1, 2025.

A replacement levy is imposed at the same original millage rate of the levy it is replacing. By contrast, subdivisions may also propose renewal levies, which extend the term of an existing levy at its current effective millage rate – i.e., its rate after reductions resulting from the H.B. 920 tax reduction factors. The tax reduction factors have the effect of lowering a levy's effective millage over time.. Consequently, unlike a renewal levy, a replacement levy allows subdivisions to receive the benefit of any growth in property tax values that occurred during the life of the existing levy.

S. B.
107

Include state, district school board members on
partisan ballot

Sponsor: Brenner

Committee: General Government

Sponsor Hearing: February 26, no more scheduled yet

Why this is a bad bill: This would politicize schools. It would also increase the cost of running for school board since Party \$ would flow into races.

These races are nonpartisan in order to focus on the real issues of the school district. Politicizing them would take the focus off the real issues. It would also impact who runs, causing us to lose good candidates who aren't interested in political careers, but passionate about their schools. In some areas it would give more support to some extremist

SB 68: Nonchartered ESAs

Sponsor: Romanchuk

Committee: Senate Finance

Hearing: Feb. 18, Sponsor; Feb. 25, 2 PM, Proponent, none scheduled now

Establishes a Nonchartered Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) Program — the next step for universal voucher supporters

- “ESAs are vouchers-plus”
- “ESAs were a helpful rebranding” for voucher supporters
- **Call them what they are: unaccountable vouchers!**

SB 66: Include certain levies, taxes in school millage floor calculation

Sponsors: O'Brien, Lang. Committee: Senate Ways and Means. Hearing: 1st, Sponsor Feb. 18th; 2nd, Proponent, Feb. 25; 3rd: Mar. 4th, all ., not scheduled this week

The bill

Under current law, the calculation of a school district's 20-mill floor includes only inside millage used for operating expenses and voted, fixed-rate operating expense levies. Fixed-sum levies are not included in the calculation, even if the revenue from those levies is used for operating expenses.

The bill expands the types of levies included in the floor calculation. The effect of these changes, for school districts that impose one or more of these levies, is to increase the total millage that is compared to the 20-mill floor. If the district was previously on the floor, the new calculation may push the district above the floor, **with the result that the district will not see full revenue growth from its voted property tax levies that are affected by the tax reduction factor until the district falls back to the 20-mill floor.**

SB 4: Election Integrity Act (Gavarone)

- [SB4](#) - Creates the Election Integrity Unit within the Secretary of State's office; modifies election fraud prosecution process.

STALLED IN COMMITTEE – ONLY SPONSOR HEARING

- Sets a 12-month window for county prosecutors to pursue election fraud referrals. After 12-months, the AG can pursue
- The EIU mirrors the [Public Integrity Division](#) that was [created in October 2022](#)
 - The EIU is charged with investigating election fraud and voter suppression allegations
 - The EIU can refer investigations to outside state and federal agencies
 - The EIU can hold hearings, call witnesses, and compel documentation
 - Produce an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly

Other Bills to Watch

SB 44 – Double dipping

- Allow students to concurrently receive an Ed Choice scholarship or Pilot Project scholarship **and** either an Autism or Jon Peterson Special Needs scholarship
- “Senate Bill 44 could cost Ohio up to \$38 million a year”

HB 30

- Phase-down the state income tax to a flat rate of 2.75% over two years. No movement.

Positive Bills to Watch

- [SB 82](#) - Senate Introduced specify that certain election officials are designated public service workers for purposes of the public records law. Only Sponsor testimony
- [HB97](#) – Public School Meals for all. Sponsor testimony this week
- [HB62](#)- College Plus Sponsor testimony this week

Tell your members of
Congress to oppose the
SAVE Act

- The House and Senate introduced the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, which would require citizenship documentation to register to vote despite the fact that voters in every state are already required to affirm or verify their citizenship status when registering.
- State election officials have systems to verify an individual voter's eligibility and ensure voter rolls are accurate.
- The bill's requirement of a document to prove American citizenship to register to vote in federal elections is unnecessary and seeks to divide us. Further, it creates one more barrier to the voting process, as many eligible voters do not have easy access to the necessary documents.
- Americans do not need MORE obstacles to vote.
- Congress must act to ensure that every eligible US citizen has the freedom to vote unimpeded by discriminatory rules rooted in fear and division.

Take Action

LWVUS Calls for Consensus Meetings on Federal Judiciary Study

**Result of LWV 2024 Convention
Vote**

Federal Judiciary Study

- The Federal Judiciary Study Committee hosted a town hall for members to learn more about the study, pose questions, and hear from leading experts. In case you missed it, a recording of the town hall is now available on the [League Management Site](#).

FEDERAL JUDICIARY STUDY TOWN HALL

- New materials, including consensus questions, discussion prompts, and more are now available on the [League Management Site](#).
- Following your League's consensus meetings, each League — not individual members — should report the results of their meeting via this online survey. A PDF of the survey is also available.

POST-CONSENSUS MEETING SURVEY: to be completed by April 14th

NEXT LOBBY CALL

MARCH 25, 2025