

## Prop. 305: Empowerment Scholarship Accounts

### **Arguments Submitted “Against” Prop. 305**

Proposition 305 is the wrong choice for Arizona. We know this not because we're political insiders or paid lobbyists. In fact, we're the furthest thing from it. We're regular Arizona parents and teachers who witnessed politicians pushing through a bad bill even though unprecedented numbers of voters were speaking out against it. We have kids in public schools and in charter schools. We're military veterans and grandparents. We decided that posting on Facebook wasn't enough, so six of us who had never been involved in politics before formed Save our Schools Arizona to give voters a chance to be heard. Save our Schools Arizona is opposed to Proposition 305 because it is a massive expansion of an unaccountable, irresponsible voucher program that defunds the public schools our state relies on and it fails to show that our tax dollars are being well spent. Voting no on Proposition 305 sends a loud and clear message to our elected officials and to the nation that integrity matters. Our state relies on a strong public school system to develop a skilled workforce, to maintain a good quality of life in our neighborhoods, and to grow a competitive economy for the future. Instead of expanding the ESA voucher system by a whopping 500 percent like Proposition 305 would do, we should be protecting and improving the public schools that 95 percent of Arizona families choose. Proposition 305 pokes holes in the education funding bucket, so none of our recent re-investments in teacher pay or school funding will matter if we let Proposition 305 drain millions of dollars every year. Vote No on Proposition 305 because Arizona needs strong public schools to build a strong state.

**Beth Lewis, Co-founder, Save Our Schools Arizona, Chandler and Dawn Penich-Thacker, Co-founder, Save Our Schools Arizona, Tempe**  
*Sponsored by Dawn Penich-Thacker*

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Arizona PTA has spoken for EVERY child with ONE voice for 112 years. As the largest child advocacy association in the state, we are against the statewide expansion of school vouchers and against Prop 305. Arizona and National PTA's legislative platform priorities do not support the use of public funds for private education.

Special interest groups have tried to make vouchers and school choice synonymous. They are not the same. Arizona's families have had school choice for years. ESA vouchers are the removal of public funds and funneled toward private education. Public funds are meant for public schools; not funneled to schools that are not transparent nor held accountable to anyone to allow people who can well afford private education from paying their fair share. Most of these schools don't have to accept students with special needs and discriminate against students based on race, creed, sexual orientation, and more. Finally, there is no proof that a private education is better than that in a public school because there is no accountability or transparency to prove that statement one way or the other!

Proposition 305 is an initiative that takes desperately needed funds AWAY from our public schools. Arizonans deserve fully funded public schools, quality teachers, and curriculum that makes sense. Allowing public tax dollars to fund private schools that discriminate by hand

selecting the student demographic doesn't help Arizona's future. It robs funding from the choice that 90% of Arizonans make to educate their children—public schools! Prop 305 sends teachers AWAY from our classrooms, pulls funding AWAY from repairing our schools, and takes funding AWAY from children by preventing them from receiving the world-class education that they deserve. Please join parents, teachers, and community members to be speak for Every Child with One Voice and say NO on Prop 305!

**Beth Simek, President, Arizona PTA, El Mirage and Sergio Chavez, President-Elect, Arizona PTA, Phoenix**

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#### ARGUMENT AGAINST

I am a parent with two children on the autism spectrum utilizing the existing ESA voucher system. The services provided under the current ESA program, which I fought for in 2011 and were legally confirmed by the Arizona Supreme Court in 2014, are significantly threatened by Proposition 305. I know that sounds counterintuitive to those of us currently accessing the voucher system for our special needs children, but that is the reality. Like many parents utilizing ESA, I did a lot of research and determined Prop. 305 is the wrong choice for families with special needs children.

While ESA has worked effectively for our defined class, if expanded to all students, it will just repeat the same problems we experienced before. There is a fallacy in the logic that what has worked for our small group will simply benefit more groups when expanded to everyone. Our specific benefits will be significantly diluted by the addition of a much larger population. Basically, our children will again be placed at the back of the line.

Those in favor of Prop. 305 are exploiting our children to crack open the funding door for private religious education. Our children were paraded around as the justification for a voucher expansion for those seeking a private religious education. ESA benefits will not go away for children with disabilities if Prop. 305 is rejected. However, if Prop. 305 is approved, it threatens the services currently provided to us, as the monetary incentive diminishes with more "typical" children availing themselves of ESAs.

Do not allow our children to once again be used by another group for their agenda. Vote No on Prop. 305.

**Susan Edwards, Parent of 2 Children Utilizing ESA Funding, ESA Family Network, Tempe**

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I am strongly opposed to Prop. 305 and will be voting NO. I founded and run a small but successful 25-person company in Arizona. We design and make specialized factory equipment for in Tempe and sell it to medical device companies worldwide.

Our company is totally dependent on a well-educated workforce. We employ engineers, highly skilled toolmakers, precision electromechanical assemblers, IT specialists and accountants.

Almost every person employed by my company was educated in public schools. I hired them for their knowledge, skill and ability to work well in a diverse and changing world.

We are a very technical company, and we make real things that benefit humanity. We have carefully built up a workforce of people who regularly use skills like: Trigonometry, algebra, and calculus, Basic science, Computer programming, Financial accounting, Technical writing, Metalworking, Website design, Art and photography and all kinds of engineering analysis.

The people in my company, including myself, went to public schools many years ago. In Arizona, the vast majority of career and technical education happens in public schools. To develop a workforce like the one I employ, you need highly qualified math and science teachers. You need updated computers, AP classes, magnet programs and tutoring.

When we fail to fund our public schools, we are failing to develop the workforce needed to stay competitive in the national and global economy. Our company, like most, has no shortage of financial capital. Financial capital is easy. HUMAN capital is the hard thing. HUMAN capital is the bottleneck. Prop. 305 cuts funding from the public schools that are developing Arizona's future engineers, scientists, technicians and entrepreneurs.

As an employer and voter, I join you in calling for a strong public education system by voting No on Prop. 305.

**Ed Goff, CEO, Blockwise Engineering, Phoenix**

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I am a longtime school choice advocate. That is why I urge you to vote NO on Proposition 305. If approved, Prop. 305 would do two things that are bad for the future of school choice in Arizona.

First, while I am a believer in the ESA program, Proposition 305 is not well thought out. They could have written the bill in a much more responsible way that fixed existing flaws in the ESA program and made accessing ESAs more just. Second, Proposition 305 should be rejected because it "voter protects," or locks in, enrollment rates and a cap that we may want to change in the future but won't be able to due to Arizona law. Voting "NO" on Proposition 305 ensures the cap on the ESA program is defeated and the program can be expanded by the Legislature in the future, ensuring ESAs can be made more widely available to all Arizona children who need it.

The families already benefiting from ESAs, those with children with disabilities, children of active duty military personnel, children attending a D or F rated school, children with a blind or deaf guardian, children residing on an Indian Reservation, children who are wards of the Court, and siblings of ESA students, won't be impacted by a NO vote on Proposition 305. Voting NO on Proposition 305 does not change the current ESA program or disrupt students currently using it.

All pro-school choice and pro-ESA Arizonans should vote NO on Proposition 305 to ensure our state has the flexibility to provide families with the best options in the future.

**Charles Siler, Former External Affairs Manager, Goldwater Institute, Scottsdale**

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Public education has been the corner stone of our society since the formulation of the Latin Grammar School in 1635.

But now...this cornerstone upon which our society was built is in jeopardy.

Through their non-support for public schools, some Arizona politicians have demonstrated a lack of social conscience by stripping funds from public schools to give to private schools.

The actions of these politicians ...some from LD 14...harm the community where I live....Sierra Vista.

We face a tremendous challenge recruiting physicians for our new hospital.

Recently at a school board meeting in Sierra Vista, two wives of local physicians were “spot on” when they talked about the impact an education system has on physician recruiting for Canyon Vista Medical Center. Physicians... along with other health care professionals... want a positive quality of life for their family....and adequately funded education and quality health care are major ingredients in that life style.

As the board chair of the former Sierra Vista Regional Health Center, I experienced difficulty recruiting physicians because of the negative impact from low financial support of our public school system. We lost several physicians because they and their wives were concerned about the lack of financial support for education.

When they reviewed the Sierra Vista school budget and saw how little funding was available for their children, they simply located elsewhere .... and deprived the community of their health care skills.

And in a rural community like Sierra Vista... failure to recruit physicians is devastating to population health.

Just as citizens have a right to quality health care coverage, they also have the right to an adequately and permanently funded education system for their children.

I urge you to veto the legislature’s action by voting NO on proposition 305.

**Lanny A. Kope, EdD., Past Board Chair Sierra Vista Regional Health Center, Retired High School Principal, Sierra Vista**

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This year, we witnessed a public outcry unlike anything in recent memory when public education advocates stormed the capitol, demanding better wages and better conditions in our state’s public schools. As a result, our elected officials made meaningful progress towards restoring the recession-era budget cuts and funding freezes that have paralyzed our schools for a decade. But there’s still a long way to go. Proposition 305, the universal expansion of school vouchers, could not come at a worse time. In the midst of what can only be described as a financial crisis in our public school system that we have just begun to address this year, Proposition 305 aims to take even more money out of an account that’s already overdrawn. Everyone knows you don’t buy a more expensive house if you can’t afford your current mortgage. The taxpayers of Arizona simply can’t afford to fund both a public and private school system for our children.

Further, the lack of accountability that comes with vouchers should concern every taxpayer. Funds awarded through ESAs have no meaningful or consistent oversight to ensure that the funds are used for approved educational expenses. By the time we find out the money has been misspent, it’s already gone. With no meaningful income-based eligibility, it’s just as likely that a voucher would be a taxpayer subsidy for someone who can easily afford to send their child to

private school without the state's help. Vouchers take badly-needed revenue from neighborhood schools and proven programs and give it away with no oversight and no way to measure results. Vote NO on Proposition 305 and keep our taxpayer dollars where we can see them: in our public school classrooms.

**Timothy L. Ogle, Ph.D., Friends of ASBA, Phoenix**

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The Secular Coalition for Arizona encourages a "NO" vote on Proposition 305, the Expansion of Empowerment Scholarships Accounts (ESAs) bill passed by the Senate last year. ESAs are often referred to as a school voucher program that was declared unconstitutional in 2011 by the state Court of Appeals because "vouchers" were earmarked for private and sectarian schools violating Arizona's Constitution that prohibits state aid to private and religious schools. It was only some "legal engineering" that brought ESAs into being because ESAs are supposedly state funds earmarked for parents of qualifying students to purchase "educational services." No additional educational services were created as destinations for state funds after the name was changed from school vouchers to Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, only more avenues for use for private profit rather than public good.

The inability to adequately supervise the expenditures made by ESA recipients has been documented through investigations by the Arizona Republic and the admission of the Department of Education that they do not have adequate resources to do a meaningful audit of program expenditures. Some parents were reported transferring scholarship funds into 529 college-savings accounts and then immediately leaving the program. Others pocketed the money and continued sending their kids to public schools.

We believe that public education dollars would be more wisely spent on public schools where accountability is evident and there is no question about money being diverted to private and religious schools, directly or indirectly. ESA funds going to public schools would improve the state's educational outcomes and help bolster the economic potential in Arizona.

**Zenaido Quintana, Chair, Secular Coalition for Arizona, Phoenix**

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The non-partisan League of Women Voters of Arizona urges a NO vote on Proposition 305 in order to stop a law passed by the AZ Legislature in 2017. That law expands the AZ Empowerment Scholarship Account program (known as ESA) to all students in AZ.

Passage of Proposition 305 would result in a major step toward privatizing education in our state. The League of Women Voters and the AZ Constitution both speak to ensuring that the state provides adequate funds for a PUBLIC education for all AZ students. Neither the League of Women Voters nor the AZ Constitution speak to a state role in providing funds for private education.

Expanding Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA), also known as vouchers, to more students will take away public money badly needed for our already underfunded public schools both traditional and charter. The public schools monies given to the child for an ESA are put on a debit card and given to the parent for payment of private school tuition including religious

schools, home schooling or other ‘qualified’ expenses. There is little or no accounting by the state of how these monies are actually used.

Also almost all private/religious school tuition is significantly more than the amount on the debit card. As a result, the ESA/voucher program has been used almost exclusively by wealthy families to subsidize the cost of the private education they would be using for their children in the first place. Passage of Proposition 305 will continue a frightening trend toward a dual education system – one for the very wealthy and one for those the rest of us.

The League of Women Voters believes a strong democracy includes a free and quality public education for all children. Vote NO on Proposition 305.

**Robyn Prud'homme-Bauer, Co-President, League of Women Voters of Arizona, Clarkdale**

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I’m against Proposition 305. Proposition 305 would expand Educational Savings Accounts (ESA’s) and put more state funds into private schools. How does this effect local schools? It makes the amount of money available to schools STATE WIDE smaller. Even if money is not taken directly from your local district and charter schools (both publicly funded), money is taken from the education budget on the state level. That effects EVERY public district, charter, school, teacher, and student in the state of Arizona.

A February 2018 study published in USA Today states, “The large share of ESL students and low graduation rate may suggest Arizona needs to invest more in its education system.”

Every student in the state of Arizona deserves a high quality education. That requires FULL state funding for all aspects of education in all districts throughout the state. Students deserve teachers who are fully present and invested in their classroom, not distracted by stresses that are avoidable. Students deserve a safe place with consistent adult involvement, where they can count on their teacher, counselor, cafeteria worker, custodian, principal, ect. being present and available for any crisis or celebration they come to school with. They deserve for their parents to have gainful employment that is consistent. Strong schools are a key tool to bringing industry and manufacturing into communities. They deserve quality healthcare. Attracting health care providers depends on strong schools, especially in rural areas that are currently underserved. Full funding of public schools, competitive pay for all adults who work in a school system, building maintenance, transportation, health care benefits, retirement, etc...because our ENTIRE population deserves it!

I am against prop 305 because our state deserves the BEST public education system, and to become the best requires putting money INTO that system, NOT taking it out.

**Susan Collins, Private Citizen, Kingman**

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Arizonans should vote NO on Proposition 305 because the expanded voucher program will undermine the financial structure of our educational system. I support religious education, but I

believe in the separation of church and state. Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA) are a vehicle that moves public money into the hands of parents to use for secular and religious private schools or homeschooling without financial or achievement accountability. This is a violation of the spirit of our Constitution.

As a retired high school administrator, I keep up to date with state and local events especially as they relate to education. I love that we're a nation of opportunity, a nation that helps people realize their dreams. Fewer things play a bigger role in our democracy than our public schools. A strong country needs an educated population.

I have experienced the impact that the fiscal cuts made to our state's education budget have had on the campuses where I have worked. I am disheartened by the negative rhetoric from our state's leaders about our public schools. Proposition 305 is simply the latest line in the steady attacks.

While my kids graduated from both public and private schools, sending my older daughter was a choice. I have grandkids in parochial schools now. Again that is a choice. It is important that there are well-funded public schools ready to educate all children and prepare them for the future. Don't let special interests drain our education budget. Vote NO with me on Proposition 305.

#### **M. Lisa Scinto, Retired Educator, Phoenix**

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Quality universal education has long been a benchmark of democracies and developed nations. In fact it's required by Article 11 of the Arizona Constitution. Section 1.A says the government shall provide a general and uniform public school system. Article 6 says that both sexes shall be allowed to attend these schools that shall be as nearly free as possible. Article 7 says that no sectarian education shall be allowed and no religious or political test shall ever be required for student or teacher.

To improve the economic status of any country, the first act is to ensure that all children, rich and poor, no matter what color or ethnicity or tribe or from what region receive quality education from an early age. Especially in the United States, one of the most diverse countries in the world, a common education is the major thread that ties us all into one nation.

The use of vouchers to create a separate education system has been a popular tactic to keep people apart. Whites used it in the South after the Civil War to create segregated and very unequal schools. Many religious denominations have used it to separate boys from girls and restrict what girls could learn. Even publicly funded universities have in the past refused education to women in certain professions. All of these gambits have been found not only to be illegal, but also to be harmful to the individual and the society. One of the major obligations of a government is to provide a quality, universal education for all its constituents. That is the only way we can weave together a unified nation. We need to focus on improving our public schools not creating a separate system.

**Dianne Post, Legislative Action Coordinator, National Organization for Women Arizona, Phoenix**

*Sponsored by National Organization for Women Arizona*

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As leaders in our faith communities, we believe all children have a right to a quality public education. We believe our teachers deserve a just and competitive wage for their labors. We believe all our children and all our teachers deserve public school buildings and school buses that are well maintained and safe. We believe all our children and all our teachers deserve learning and teaching environments that are dignified and properly cared for. We believe a well-funded and maintained public school system is the bedrock of our democracy and we value robust funding of our public district and charter schools. That is why we urge a no vote on Prop. 305. We believe Prop. 305 is wrong for Arizona because we believe we cannot afford to lose one more dollar from our already alarmingly underfunded public education system in Arizona. We believe a no vote on Prop. 305 to be in the best interest of the common good and most especially in the best interest of the families, children, teachers and communities who rely on public district and charter schools.

Fr. Enrique Cadena  
Vicar  
Iglesia Episcopal de San Pablo, Phoenix

The Rev. Dr. Kristin Hansen  
Pastor  
Desert Foothills United Methodist Church

The Rev. Anne K. Ellsworth  
Priest  
Episcopal Diocese of Arizona

**Father Enrique Cadena, Iglesia Episcopal de San Pablo, Phoenix; The Rev. Dr. Kristin Hansen, Desert Foothills United Methodist Church, Phoenix; and The Rev. Anne Ellsworth, Episcopal Diocese of Arizona, Tempe**  
*Sponsored by The Rev. Anne Ellsworth*

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I urge Arizonans to vote No on Proposition 305. Most Arizonans attended public schools, and today, more than 90% of our families continue to attend them. While we have challenges, our public schools are required to follow strict accountability measures and adhere to a universal Progress Meter for important outcomes. Proposition 305 takes taxpayer dollars out of the public school system and gives them to private interests. This approach lacks accountability, oversight and provides no way to assess outcomes; all things any business leader knows are essential for success.

The education challenges we face in Arizona are not unlike other issues we've faced in the past. Yet, outside national forces see Arizona as ground zero to influence education policy in a radical



direction that could seriously damage our future. The forces promoting Proposition 305 intend to move aggressively toward a model that provides every family with a low, flat monetary amount per child, that can be used for private education at the expense of public schools.

This approach leaves our public schools even further eroded by the reduction in funding per pupil. Teacher salaries will yet again stagnate or even diminish as cost of living rises, and the teacher shortage will continue or increase. With less money in public education, already declining infrastructure and technology will erode further and businesses will face an under-prepared workforce.

Budget challenges across the nation and within Arizona are not easy. However, expanding Prop. 305 at the expense of public education is a march in the wrong direction. Without a strong public education system that encourages all Arizona children to reach their full potential, not only will our current issues remain unresolved, Arizonans risk more challenges our future leaders will be unprepared to conquer. Let's prepare Arizona for success by voting No on Proposition 305.

**Lisa Urias, Business Leader, Phoenix**

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Vote No on Proposition 305

This proposition expands Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) to all children in the state, which will hurt the 95% of Arizona children who attend public schools. Millions of dollars will be taken from our public school classrooms each year--dollars that are sorely needed for salaries, instructional materials and building maintenance.

ESA vouchers will divert tax revenue to subsidize private school tuition. The cost of tuition at most private schools is considerably higher than the value of a voucher. Wealthy families, who can afford the balance, will be the primary beneficiaries of ESA vouchers, at taxpayers' expense.

ESA vouchers take money from rural schools and neighborhoods which lack private schools, shifting funds to wealthy areas. Also, special needs students will suffer as they will no longer have priority for vouchers.

ESA vouchers lack accountability and transparency. Private schools are not held to the same standards that are required of public school districts. We will not know how our taxpayer dollars are being used.

All our children deserve a world-class education. The economic future of Arizona depends on a well-educated public. This proposition undermines the ability of public schools to deliver quality education.

We urge you to vote no on this proposition.

**Mary Daly, alliance 4 action, Green Valley**

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Voices for Education urges you to Vote NO on Proposition 305. Prop 305 expands Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs)-Vouchers. Every penny that goes to vouchers takes money from the 94% of Arizona students who attend public schools. The millions to fund ESA-Vouchers support just 5% of students. Arizona classrooms are already overcrowded and teachers underpaid because Arizona under-funds our schools.

We need to invest our tax dollars where the students are. Funneling money out of public school funds means larger classes, greater numbers of teachers leaving, limited foreign language and advanced math classes, fewer librarians, counselors and school nurses and cuts of art, music and PE classes.

For twenty years, Voices for Education has advocated for a great education for every Arizona child. Proposition 305 makes that impossible by gutting public school funding in Tucson and throughout Arizona. Vote No on Proposition 305 to ensure every Arizona child has access to a high quality education, not just a few.

**Robin Hiller, Executive Director, Voices for Education, Tucson**

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Save our schools from “VOUCHER VULTURES”

VOTE “NO” ON PROPOSITION 305 -SAVE OUR SCHOOLS ARIZONA. The wording is deceptive and hides the "money vultures" who continue to devour our tax payer school dollars to pay for private schools. Public schools and public school teachers need ALL our taxpayer dollars.

Vouchers take our taxpayer public money to support private schools. As a parent, I can take taxpayer dollars from the public school fund and apply it to the tuition for my child at a private school. Can all parents afford to make that choice? NO! Public schools were created to serve “all the students” --those with average, above average or below average abilities and their needs. (It’s the American way) Private schools can pick and choose the students they will accept while at the same time not being required to meet state law requirements.

VOTE “NO” ON PROPOSITION 305 -SAVE OUR SCHOOLS ARIZONA. The wording is deceptive and hides the “money vultures” who continue to devour our tax payer school dollars in support of private schools. Public schools and public school teachers need ALL our taxpayer dollars.

**Diane Uhl, Retired Teacher/Taxpayer, Oro Valley**

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As a parent who will send my children to public school, a hard working member in the private sector, and a former educator who understands the intricacies of public education, I am asking my fellow Arizonans to soundly reject Prop 305. We need to tell those who are assaulting public education that we will not stand for it anymore.

We owe those brave teachers who walked out a debt of gratitude. They took a stand, and in doing so they helped expose our lawmakers for who they are: People who didn't happen upon a school system in distress, but rather that they are the architects of such a system.

Now, those same lawmakers who refused to listen to the teachers are asking for Arizonans to buy into another ruse of voting in favor of Proposition 305. We need to continue forcing those leaders to do better for our children.

I left teaching in 2012. At that time, it was normal to have class sizes that were 50+ students. My school turned off hallway lights during classes to save on utilities, thereby creating unsafe environments for students. With nearly 1,300 high school students, we could only afford one security guard, rationed teacher supplies excessively, and were forced to ration toilet paper. This was at a school in a middle class community. Schools in impoverished areas have it way worse.

This is what our lawmakers did, by design. If they starve public schools, charters become more desirable. Many of our lawmakers own charter schools.

In other words, they are profiting off of hurting kids. And those same individuals are asking you to vote "yes" on prop 305.

The only logical, compassionate, and ethical step to take as an electorate is to vote "no" on prop 305.

Our schools deserve better!

**Dr. Jason Thompson, Chandler**

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Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL) opposes Prop. 305, a proposition that if passed would enable private school tuition to be funded with public taxpayer money. GPL stood firmly against the expansion of vouchers in the 2017 legislative session and believes that we must expand resources for traditional public education to all Arizonan's before we expand the voucher system.

GPL members have worked to develop and support the Arizona Progress Meter which incorporates strict accountability, goals and measures for public schools. Currently, public schools must meet a level of transparency and accountability and have a consistent set of rules as they are funded by taxpayer dollars. Private schools are not required to meet those same standards.

Taxpayer dollars must remain accountable and all funds administered from the Arizona General Fund should be held to the same level of scrutiny.

**Neil Giuliano, President and CEO, Greater Phoenix Leadership, Tempe**

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Here are the 7 reasons I'm voting NO on Prop 305--expansion of vouchers:

- 1) It will cost our state more because the amount given per voucher exceeds the per pupil amount given to districts.
- 2) It will cost families more because a voucher for a typical student will not cover the full cost of private school tuition.
- 3) There is no accountability for student achievement.
- 4) There is no accountability for how our taxpayer dollars are spent.
- 5) Those with special needs lose the preference they receive under the current ESA program.
- 6) Students in private schools do not have the same rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that they have in public schools.
- 7) Our state constitution, established in 1912, states "No tax shall be laid or appropriation of public money made in aid of any church, or private or sectarian school, or any public service corporation."—Art. IX, Sec. 10.

Please join me in voting NO on Prop 305!

Jill Humpherys  
Mother  
Grandmother  
Private Citizen  
Gilbert Public Schools Board Member

**Jill Humpherys, Mother, Grandmother, Citizen, Gilbert Public Schools Board Member, Gilbert**

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Stand for Children Arizona Urges You to Vote NO on Proposition 305.

Stand for Children Arizona is a non-partisan education advocacy organization focused on ensuring all Arizona students receive a high-quality education.

Prop 305 expands funding for private schools through the ESA program, taking dollars away from our public school students - both in district and charter schools.

Arizona spends almost a billion dollars less on our public schools now than it did in 2008. We need to invest in underfunded public schools, not take away their funding and give it to private schools.

Also, while public schools - both district and charter - are held accountable for student progress, private schools that receive ESA funds have no accountability. In fact, there is no way to determine if taxpayer funds going to private schools are being misused.

Proposition 305 is bad for Arizona public schools and bad for Arizona taxpayers.

Please vote NO on Proposition 305.

**Rebecca Gau, Arizona Executive Director, Stand for Children, Mesa**

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This coming November Proposition (Prop) 305 ESA Vouchers will be on the ballot. Citizens will be protecting public education funding by voting NO on Prop 305!

When ESA voucher money leaves our state treasury, and is diverted to private schools it will not go to our public school teachers, support staff and school facilities - because 95 percent of Arizona's children don't even attend private schools.

Prop 305 is on the ballot is because when this big government giveaway was originally passed by the political hacks in the state legislature, as the Senate Bill (SB) 1431 ESA vouchers bill, many Arizona residents immediately recognized what an educational funding scam it was. Arizona residents then mobilized into the Save Our Schools Arizona (SOS Arizona) referendum petition committee. On August 7, 2017, when SOS Arizona delivered 111,540 anti-SB 1431 signatures to the Arizona Secretary of State Office, the SB 1431 ESA vouchers were on their way to the November ballot as Prop 305, so we can vote it down.

The NO on Prop 305 forces are your local neighbors, parents, teachers, business leader and many others. In contrast to these groups, the main financial backers of Prop 305, do not even live in Arizona. Two of these nonresident plutocrats, are the billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch, who fund the ESA Voucher support organization named the Americans for Prosperity. Another such support organization is named the American Federation for Children, which was organized and financed by out-of-state billionaire Betsy DeVos.

Many of Arizona's citizens see through this dark money charade. These residents are demanding excellent Arizona public schools and will be voting NO on Prop 305 this November.

**Mario Martinez, Tempe**

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Prop 305 is bad for Arizona kids. It takes desperately needed dollars away from public district and charter schools, even though 95% of Arizona families choose public schools. Here are reasons to vote NO on Prop 305:

- Having a voucher doesn't guarantee admission into any private school. Legally, private schools can discriminate and deny admission based on sex, religion, disability, income, political party, LGBTQ, discipline history or almost any other reason.
- Vouchers lack financial accountability. During just a 6-month period in 2016, there was over \$100,000 in fraudulent ESA spending.
- Vouchers lack academic accountability. Private schools don't have to teach state standards, or publish results of any standardized testing like public schools do.
- Vouchers rarely cover the cost of private school, making it NOT a true choice for middle class or low-income families.
- There are no income limits for vouchers. Wealthy families that could already afford a private education can get private school tuition subsidized by your tax dollars. In fact, 75% of current ESA recipients come from wealthier families.

- Vouchers send public tax dollars to religious institutions, like Islamic and Christian schools.
- ESA was designed to help kids with special needs, foster kids, kids of active duty military, kids from failing schools. Currently, only a few thousand students use ESA.
- Prop 305 wants to expand it to 30,000 kids, an increase of 500%!
- Prop 305 would make ESA first come first served. This means that the kids it was designed to help, like kids with special needs, could lose out on an ESA if they didn't apply fast enough. The majority of those 30,000 recipients of tax dollars could end up being wealthy kids with no disabilities.

Voucher expansion is bad for Arizonans. Vote NO on Prop 305!

### **Monica Gellman, Phoenix**

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The Southern Arizona Leadership Council (SALC) strongly encourages the voters of Arizona to vote "NO" on Proposition 305. Proposition 305 expands the use of Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) beyond their intended purpose and will siphon money from our already under-funded public education system. Empowerment Scholarship Accounts were originally established to help those in need: Those with special learning and physical requirements, those attending a D or F rated school, those who are a ward of the court as well as a few other special cases. Currently just over 23,000 students are eligible for ESAs. Prop 305 would make all 1 million students in Arizona eligible for this "voucher" system, not just those with special needs. Should these newly-eligible students apply and use the available ESAs up to the cap, it could eliminate the availability of an ESA for those it was originally intended to help – children with special circumstances.

Arizonans agree that our public education system is currently in need of more funding. Prop 305, however, will take money out the system. Current students with approved ESAs take approximately \$55 million out of the available monies for public school funding. Passage of Prop 305 could increase that amount to more than \$240 million. This would result in less support for our public schools and further growth for private schools eligible to receive the ESA funds. SALC urges you to prioritize proper funding of our public school education system by voting "NO" on Proposition 305.

### **Edward Maxwell, President/CEO, Southern Arizona Leadership Council, Oro Valley**

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The title of this Proposition is deceptive! Last summer, grassroots "Save our Schools Arizona" collected 100,000+ signatures so we would have a chance to VOTE NO on this drain of our public tax money. I am a Republican teacher who, along with many, decided we'd had enough and walked out this year. I did it because funding for schools is being sneakily diverted by organizations and legislators who make money from these ESA vouchers.

"We the People" decide, right? Not if the Legislature had its way this past year. The attorney for "voucher"/ESA supporters stated the "expanded program deserved a day in court." However, what they did NOT want was this referendum to go to the voters! Their plan was to get the

111,540 ballot signatures thrown out! The Supreme Court said “NO,” so now we have a chance to VOTE NO!

Here are the facts...

In 2006, the AZ Supreme Court ruled tax money could not go directly from government to private/religious schools.

To do it “indirectly,” ESA supporters/legislators started non-profit companies, then sent the donations through a voucher broker (who charges 10%). The owner of one of the largest voucher brokers was our AZ Senate President who employed his wife and son and rented his own building from himself! (\$17 million was collected in 2013/14 = \$1.7 million!) Conflict of interest? Not in Arizona!

First touted as being for special needs children, this new plan was to make “vouchers” UNIVERSAL. A NO Vote means that there will STILL be vouchers available for special needs and low-income kids, but that no ADDITIONAL money may be siphoned off from public tax funds and used in a way that has little/no oversight.

VOTE NO on Prop 305! If you don’t, we may not have any public schools left to save!

**Bonnie Hickman, (Formerly a Candidate for LD16 House 2018), Mesa**

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Arizona families are rightfully demanding transparency in government, accountability and responsible stewardship of our tax dollars, and deserve to have school choice. Expanding Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) does none of those things.

- 1.) Voucher expansion creates an uneven playing field by paying more to families whose children were enrolled in a charter school. A family from a public school would receive less money than a family from a charter school even though both are funded by tax money.
- 2.) Voucher funds comes directly out of the budget of the school the child attends. When one student leaves your neighborhood public school or selected charter school, your local community is negatively impacted by taking away needed funds from your teachers and classrooms.
- 3.) AZ Politicians supporting this proposition have financial interests tied directly to for profit schools that already are receiving most of the exiting ESA dollars. A YES vote directly increases their personal bank accounts on your tax payer dime.
- 4.) Prop 305 eliminates personal accountability because it eliminates State audits on how disbursed funds are being spent. Funds could be used by a family to take an “educational” trip to San Diego just as easily as they could to help offset costs of a private education.
- 5.) If a family is found to have abused voucher money – there is NO WAY to make them pay it back. This incentivizes people to abuse the system
- 6.) A NO vote will NOT stop the current program that serves developmentally delayed students from having access to extra funds to support their educational needs. The existing voucher program has oversight to make sure money is spent properly, and provides real options for Arizona families.

Vote “No” on Prop 305.

Preserve your individual choices and make sure our tax dollars cannot be abused.

**Valerie Lim, Voter, Indivisible AZCD5, Gilbert and Rebecca McHood, Voter, Indivisible AZCD5, Gilbert**

*Sponsored by Rebecca McHood*

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As a parent and an engineer, I believe Prop 305 will harm Arizona public schools. The funding for the new ESAs / vouchers comes from the general education fund, so increasing ESAs / vouchers is dollar for dollar less money for public schools, which serve 90% of students in Arizona. The state legislature just added \$300 million to the education budget to give the teachers a raise and we cannot afford to take \$120 million a year back out of that fund. These vouchers are far more than the incremental cost of adding one child to the classroom, so disproportionately more money will be taken from public schools and given to private schools. At the same time, the vouchers will not cover the full costs of private school so low income families still won't be able to afford to send their children. Studies have shown that private schools don't actually improve outcomes for low income students. This program lacks oversight and once the money is provided to the parents there is no accountability for the use. There IS a need for vouchers for children who cannot be served in the public or charter school setting, however that need is best met with the current program that provides vouchers for children with special needs and assigned to failing schools. A no vote will keep the status quo and keep the vouchers in the hands of the children who really need them. A yes vote will open the program to 30,000 new children on a first come, first served basis without any priority given to children who actually NEED them. Better public schools also increase property values. Strong schools means a strong state! Please protect our future and vote NO on Prop 305!!!

**Krista McKinney, Parent and Engineer, Chandler**

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I urge everyone who wants their tax money to support public schools, not private and parochial schools, to vote NO on more vouchers.

This proposition is confusing for many because voting NO means supporting the public schools, while voting YES means sending more of our tax money to send kids to private and parochial schools.

Voting NO rejects a law the Republican majority in the Legislature passed that would give away even more money than we already do to benefit private (usually for-profit ) and parochial schools at the expense of our public schools, that are already struggling to pay teachers and support staff decent wages, to repair aging schools, and to keep up with the times.

Voting YES keeps the law in place and uses your tax money to expand the voucher program for non-public schools and the (often higher income) families that use them.



I have nothing against private and parochial schools and families who use them, but they should not benefit from my tax money. They already get too much of that through far more generous tax credits than we can get for helping public schools.

Please vote NO, but then vote YES on the other education proposition that slightly increases income tax on wealthier people to support our public schools.

Barbara Tellman, parent of an underpaid and overworked public school teacher, and grandparent of three who got a good education in public schools before the Legislature drove Arizona to the bottom in public school funding.

**Ms. Barbara Tellman, Grandparent, Retired, Tucson**

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I oppose Prop 305 ESA expansion because it does not provide enough accountability or transparency to ensure taxpayer dollars are used to support Arizona children's educational outcomes. Further, ESA expansion will leave too many children behind, when adequate, accountable investment in accessible public schools would be a better way to address our existing lack of adequate education options for all Arizona children.

I am a mother of 2 children with learning and developmental differences. As a special education parent, I manage challenges that appear impossible every day. I have spent hours, days and months pretending everything is okay as we navigated our children's educational options inside the public district, public charter, and private schools. We have done our best to work with school staff to overcome our children's academic, mental, and social challenges with atypical peers. But sometimes our choices come from a place of despair, and we seek guidance or options that we did not plan for. Sometimes, the existing options inside public schools are not enough. Empowerment Scholarships Accounts (ESA) have provided previously unavailable alternatives for families that have tried most available options. The flexibility of ESAs is why they can work well. However, there is not enough accountability or transparency to ensure that tax dollars for ESAs support adequate and appropriate educational outcomes for Arizona children...

ESA expansion under Prop 305 is a cash giveaway to third-party payment services and merchants. With no accountability for return on investment in our children's education. ESA expansion navigate's a progressive path of lack thereof in financial transparency & accountability. ESAs are only accessible by some parents who are able to patch together services for their children. For these reasons, I urge you to vote No on Prop 305.

**Onida Perkel, Parent, Public Ed. Defender, Scottsdale**

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