



DIVE DEEP INTO THE LATEST SCHOOL VOUCHER BATTLE



Arizona voters will [decide this fall](#) on whether to allow the expansion of a program that uses public funds to pay private school tuition.

The race will be closely watched, as the state is the [second in the nation](#) designed to offer vouchers to all students, not just children from, e.g., low-income families or students with disabilities. (Nevada was the first, but that effort stalled after the state supreme court found the funding mechanism unconstitutional, and lawmakers' efforts to change the funding stream have thus far failed.)

The Arizona vouchers take the form of education savings accounts (ESAs)—called “Empowerment Scholarship Accounts” in Arizona. Instead of issuing a voucher to be cashed by a private school, the savings account funds flow into accounts that can be used by parents to pay private school tuition or other education expenses. To receive the ESA money, families must simply agree not to send their child to a public school.

An anti-voucher group called [Save our Schools Arizona](#) gathered enough signatures to put the program's expansion to a vote of the people. In March, the state supreme court blocked efforts by voucher supporters (including the billionaire Koch brothers and the [American Federation for Children](#), the organization formally headed by U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos), to keep the vouchers off the ballot. The wealthy advocates are expected to spend a great deal of money to defeat the ballot measure, called Proposition 305, and preserve the program's expansion.

As the Arizona voucher battleground heats up, NEPC offers these resources to help understand the fight:

In *The State of Education Savings Account Programs in the United States*, Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, William J. Mathis, and Kevin G. Welner define and describe ESAs, which currently

exist in six states (Arizona, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, Nevada, and North Carolina). Their policy brief finds that state-subsidized private education is highly problematic, with recent research suggesting that voucher students would have done better had they remained in their public schools. [Click here](#) to listen to an interview with Jimenez-Castellanos.

In a policy memo called *Assessing The Fiscal Impact Of Wisconsin's Statewide Voucher Program*, Ellie Bruecker examines the fiscal impact of the statewide Wisconsin Parental Choice Program, which aims to offer universal voucher access by 2026. She finds that school districts could lose substantial portions of their state funding as program participation grows.

NEPC Resources on Vouchers

The National Education Policy Center (NEPC), housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, produces and disseminates high-quality, peer-reviewed research to inform education policy discussions. Visit us at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu>