



School Privatization in Nebraska

What We've Won (and Lost) and Learned

About Stand For Schools

At Stand For Schools, our mission is to advance public education in Nebraska by advocating for policies that strengthen our state's public schools.

We achieve this by collaborating with community members and local organizations, showcasing the excellent work taking place in our public schools, and advocating for policies that provide schools with the necessary resources to maintain Nebraska's reputation as one of the best in the nation.



The Nebraska Context

Nebraska does not have:

- Charter schools
- Vouchers
- ESAs

Nebraska does have:

- large urban school districts
- very small rural school districts
- A decently progressive needs-based school funding formula
- Option/Open enrollment for public school students



History of Privatization Attempts

We were able to defeat privatization attempts in the Legislature (vouchers)

- History of moderate rural Senators in the Unicameral that really didn't like these policies

The person leading this charge was probably the most powerful Senator in the Legislature

- Chair of the Revenue Committee and member of the Education Committee

In 2023, a tax-credit voucher program passed

- turnover of new Senators created the right conditions

Referendum campaign in the summer of 2023 qualified the tax-credit scholarship for the ballot (November 2024).

In 2024, the Legislature repealed the 2023 law and replaced it with a direct state-run voucher program

Another referendum campaign in the summer of 2024 qualified the issue for the ballot



What did we learn?



- **Strategy Matters**
 - Lots of prep work before filing the referendum (polling, fundraising, organizing)
- **Make friends**
 - The teachers' union played a decisive role, but we found other friends to help as well
- **Be prepared for road bumps**
 - Last-minute legal challenges had to be dealt with, but were anticipated
- **Everywhere was important**
 - Urban and rural coalition made a huge difference, even if messaging wasn't the same

**What has this meant for
the future of
privatization in
Nebraska?**

