

**NEBRASKA TAXPAYERS FOR FREEDOM ISSUE PAPER:
FIGHT THE TEACHERS' UNION ANTI-SCHOOL CHOICE PETITION.**

BACKGROUND. In the 2023 legislative session, conservative senators mustered sufficient votes to pass **LB 753**, which will allow contributions for opportunity scholarships for underprivileged children to take advantage of a range of educational opportunities by attending private or parochial schools, if their families believe that their public school is not adequately educating their child. The leftist teachers' union, the NE State Education Association, and its allies



immediately mobilized to oppose this bill, because the union seeks to continue its monopoly stranglehold on pre-K-12 education. Being the usual sore losers, the teachers' union, leftist nonprofits, and other school choice opponents launched a vindictive petition drive to convince voters to repeal **LB 753**. In response to this petition, our NE Taxpayers for Freedom group has joined with other education choice groups in **Keep Kids First** to convince voters to reject this petition and stop it from attaining ballot status in the Nov. 2024 election.

PETITION FIBS. Petition sponsors promote several untruths about **LB 753**.

- One whopper is that the bill will deplete taxpayer funding for public schools and educators. Actually, the legislature passed a massive state aid package, adding millions to fund public education. **LB 583** is the addition of foundation aid of \$1,500 per student and an increase in state funding for special education, so that the combination of state and federal support covers 80% of school district costs. Senators created an Education Future Fund in **LB 814** with an initial \$1 billion investment, together with plans to add \$250 million each year. School boards under **LB 243** can override tax levy lids with a majority of board members. **LB 153** created the Extraordinary Increase in Special Education Expenditures Fund, funded by \$2.5 million from the Education Future Fund for FY 2023-2024. **LB 385** begins the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act, funded by the Education Future Fund. It offers incentives for recruitment and retention of new teachers and teachers with a specialty certification. New teachers could win a \$2,500 grant at the beginning of years 2, 4, and 6. Specialty teachers are eligible for grants worth \$5,000 at the beginning of a school year. **LB 762**, the Nebraska Teacher Apprenticeship Program, meant to increase the number of teachers in Nebraska, allows eligibles to receive a grant of up to \$3,000 per semester to fund educational expenses like tuition, books, or other materials as required to receive teaching certification. The bill further required the legislature to transfer \$1 million each fiscal year from the Education Future Fund to maintain this program. The Teach in NE Today Act is a \$5 million state program providing qualifying teachers with student loan repayment assistance of up to \$5,000 annually for 5 years, with total aid capped at \$25,000 per person.
- Another misleading statement is that the law only will favor the super-wealthy. In fact, the intent of the law is to help underprivileged children benefiting from corporate and contributors of varying incomes.
- Another falsification is that the law will give money to unaccountable private schools. All schools in NE must meet minimum state standards.
- Petitioners claim that private schools can discriminate against kids based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. However, petitioners showed no evidence that NE private or parochial schools *do* discriminate in these areas. Private and parochial schools sincerely welcome children from families whose beliefs and values may have faced discrimination in the public school system.
- Proponents claim that opportunity scholarships are a tax voucher scheme for private schools. Recipients receive no formal vouchers related to taxes.
- Petitioners claim that opportunity scholarships will raise local property taxes. These private scholarships have no bearing on the levying of property taxes.

ITS LEADERS. One of the petition key leaders is Tim Royers, a liberal union teacher who may run against **LB 753** sponsor Kathleen Kauth in the 2024 Dist. 31 legislative election. Others include Jane Erdenberger, a former teacher and member of the OPS school board, Sen. Megan Hunt, who fights against school choice in the legislature, and leftist former State Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, a Democrat who ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 2022 against conservative Rep. Mike Flood. She is supposedly raising funds for the petition drive.

PETITION GROUPS. We see the usual suspects supporting the petition campaign: The leftist Open Sky Institute, Stand for Schools, and the PTA.

THE REAL FACTS. The Left wants only to deny low income and minority students, children mercilessly bullied, and children and teens from traditional values families the right to bail out of poor performance public schools. The petition, an attempt to overturn the law, is simply an attack on kids and their education opportunities. Proponents also oppose other school choice options like vouchers and charter schools that have worked well in other states. Research shows that school vouchers do improve student academic performance. School choice boosters argue that states like Florida have seen increases in academic achievement because of school choice. Petitioners seek to nullify student ability to attend a school they otherwise could never afford. Sen. Justin Wayne, who represents areas of north Omaha, said the bill would appear “transformational” for his low-income district by providing an option to parents that they previously could not afford. Wayne, a former member of the Omaha School Board, stated that private schools are already making a difference for children in his district. Some estimate that 5,000 additional students initially would attend private or parochial schools under **LB 753**. The teachers’ union simply does not want to compete with private or parochial schools. State senators have received complaints from teachers being pressured to circulate the petition or risk losing their NSEA membership, forced volunteerism. The campaign stuffs petitions into teacher mailboxes at schools, implying that all teachers must support the drive.

THE REAL SITUATION. During the pandemic, parents began paying closer attention to their childrens’ school lessons and realized that some of the content and teaching instruction was objectionable. And they decided to do something about it. They came to realize that they, not the government, are primarily responsible for the education of their kids. A lot of Angry Mama Bears and Papa Bears began attending school board meetings, objecting to the teaching of Critical Race Theory and other radical ideologies to their children. But teacher unions are enraged that parents, fuming over school curricula, would dare to examine options other than monopolistic public education. Union teachers do not want to lose control over our children. Parents should have the right to remove their kids from failing schools, similar to not returning to a coffee shop that served bad coffee. Parents now are taking the education of their children seriously. They understand that this petition campaign, if successful, will make school choice extremely difficult for our children’s education.



TAKE ACTION NOW. Don’t be one of the sheeple! Taxpayers already pay about 55%-60% of their property taxes to the public schools. Take action to quash this petition campaign. Using the points above, do the following:

- ✓ write a guest editorial to your local newspaper
- ✓ call in to a radio talk show like KFAB
- ✓ express your opinion as wide as possible on social media like Facebook and Twitter.
- ✓ Encourage friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. to decline to sign the petition.

We must defeat the insatiable greed of the teachers’ union. Join our effort at **Keep Kids First at <https://www.keepkidsfirstnebraska.com>**.

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“Don’t sign. School Choice is Fine”
Keep Kids First at <https://www.keepkidsfirstnebraska.com>.