

Join us for an online discussion with ICPE's  
education policy expert and lobbyist

**Joel Hand**



for a POST-SESSION REVIEW of  
education bills that progressed  
through Statehouse

Statewide meeting is on Zoom.  
Registration at the link.

Thursday, May 1, 2025  
6:30 p.m. EDT

[www.indianacoalitionforpubliced.org](http://www.indianacoalitionforpubliced.org)



**ICPE**

Indiana  
Coalition  
for Public  
Education



## Our Vision

The vision of the non-partisan Indiana Coalition for Public Education is to advocate for high quality, equitable, well-funded public schools for all children that are subject to democratic oversight by their communities.



## Outline for This Evening

- Welcome Remarks
- The Effort of ICPE
- The Effect of the Legislation
- What to Do Next



# The Effort of ICPE



## Our Legislative Priorities

- 1. Public schools need first priority in state education funding and the funding must keep up with inflation.
- 2. Public funds belong in public schools. Hoosier taxpayers cannot afford universal vouchers, or further expansion of voucher programs (Indiana Choice Scholarship Program, SGO scholarships, the Indiana Educational Scholarship Account Program, etc.).
- 3. All K-12 schools that receive public funds should be publicly audited for transparency and accountability.
- 4. K-12 schools that receive public funds should teach historically and scientifically accurate curricula in order to prepare students for careers and to be good citizens in a democracy.
- 5. All children deserve fully-resourced, inclusive public schools with teachers who are educated and experienced in their fields and who have a voice at the table in educational decision making.
- 6. Public schools should be locally controlled and represented by nonpartisan publicly-elected school board members who ensure schools are accountable to the communities they serve.
  
- *bills passed that harmed these priorities*

## The Numbers

### **Start of Session - 109 bills**

- ICPE began the session reviewing 109 bills affecting education and 1 Senate Joint Resolution: 58 House bills and 51 Senate bills
- We were against/partially against 27 bills and in support/partially supported 20 bills. We were neutral/watching 62 bills.

### **Mid-Session - 40 bills**

- By mid session 37 House bills and 32 Senate bills died. Most without a hearing. We were still following 40 bills into the second half.

### **End of Session - 25 bills**

- Bills that were enacted that ICPE supported: 0
- Bills that were enacted that ICPE was neutral on: 15
- Bills that were engaged that ICPE opposed: 10



## ICPE Engagement

ICPE conducted calls to action on 15 bills that we deemed most important and pertinent to our mission. Of the 15 bills, 9 died. 5 of those were absorbed in some way into other bills. Of the 4 that truly died, 2 were bills that ICPE supported.



## ICPE Engagement at the Statehouse

ICPE members and/or Joel Hand testified on 13 bills at the Statehouse. Of the 13 bills, 4 died. 2 of the 4 were absorbed into other bills.



## ICPE Membership & Lobbyist Impact on Bills

- **HB 1002** - Some dangerous charter deregulation language was removed. (But returned by the end of the bill journey.)
- **SB 287** - Massive push on legislators to not pass this bill. Bill was delayed multiple times. Bill became less bad, but damage is still about the same. Party politics can now influence school boards. AND not all folks can serve on school board due to Hatch Act.
- **SB 289** - Bill was weakened due to pressure. By the end, outrageous fines were removed.

## Lobbyist Influenced Policy

- **SB 320** is a voucher accountability bill. Joel helped write this bill with Shelli Yoder.
- About a dozen amendments which either failed or were never read or undone by the end of the session.

# The Effect of the Legislation

## Funding

- **Funding for traditional public schools is below the rate of inflation.** It is budgeted to be 3.3% in 2026 and 1.6% in 2027.
- **More money to pay for more vouchers.** \$178 million more across 2026 and 2027 is earmarked for vouchers. Most of the money will go to the highest income earners in Indiana in the second year of the biennium, when vouchers will become universal. Note, many of these students would have never intended to go public schools in the first place.
- **Cuts to grants.** Funding has been cut for special education grants (meanwhile WFYI has a series that highlights the damage of underfunding special education), NESP grants, and Career and Tech grants (HEA 1001).
- **Tax levy referendum** can only be on the ballot during general elections (SEA 1).

## Funding, Continued

- **Massive cuts to property taxes earmarked for public schools (SEA 1)**, which, on the whole for traditional public schools, zeros out the budget gains.
  - For the biennium - 2026 & 2027, public schools get an increase of \$401.5 million in the budget, but are slated to lose \$408 million in property taxes due to property tax cuts. Some districts will suffer far more than others. It will vary.
  - **Add to that a Core CPI forecast in April that forecasts inflation at 4% and 2.9% for 2026 & 2027**, which is worse than expected.

## Democracy and the Separation of Church & State

- **Democracy.** School board candidates can now declare a party when running for election. Due to this federal workers cannot run for school board due to the HATCH Act (SEA 287)
- **Separation of church & state.** There is an increase in minutes for release-time for high schoolers, but there are more accountability measures in place for third-parties that offer these religious electives (SEA 255).



## Weakening of the value of public education and public schools

- **Weakening of the value of public schools.** A homeschool diploma will now carry the same weight as a high school diploma (HEA 1348)
- **Weakening the value of public education.** The requirements of secretary of education and superintendents have been watered down. The secretary of education no longer needs to have an education background, college degree, or be from Indiana; and superintendents no longer need a master's degree. (HEA 1002 / SEA 366)

## More Bureaucracy and Deregulation of Charter Schools

- **More bureaucracy.** Creating separate agencies to manage school facilities and transportation. It is required for IPS via the Indianapolis Local Education Alliance—and an option for agencies in 3 other areas via the Centralized School Facilities Pilot Program and Local Boards. (HEA 1515)
- **HOWEVER,** final version of the ILEA language puts a temporary moratorium on new charters opening in IPS, makes Indianapolis Mayor only authority to approve new charters and removes governor appointees to ILEA and leaves ILEA within the control of IPS and the city rather than the state.
- **Deregulation of charter schools.** A school district can now legally be turned into an all-charter district and charter authorizers are no longer legally responsible to ensure that a charter school is in compliance with applicable legal standards as determined by the SBOE. (HEA 1002)

## Taxation Without Representation & School Grading

- **Taxation without representation.** Beginning in 2028, property owners will send property tax dollars (operation tax levy and operation referenda) to charter schools if they have charter schools in their district that receive over 100 students from within a local public school district. (SEA 1)
- **School grading is back.** Indiana paused on grading schools back in 2020, but grading will come back. (HEA 1498)

## Anti DEI Push and Weakening of Social & Emotional Learning

- **Anti DEI push.** Removing a mandate to provide a racial or ethnic studies course in high school. Removing any requirement of DEI training for licensing or employment and forbidding the implementation of such training on students. (HEA 1002 / SEA 289)
- **Weakening of culturally responsive teaching methods.** The required teacher prep training methods for restorative justice and social & emotional training are no longer required by teacher training programs. (HEA 1002)

## Anti-Privatization Wins

- **Guardrails were created for the ESA and CSA voucher programs.** Both programs were moved to the control of the Indiana Dept of Ed instead of the Treasurer (HEA 1001). AND a parent can't pay themselves for teaching their child. (SEA 358)
- **A \$50 million charter school building grant was removed from the budget.** (HEA 1001)
- **No universal SGOs pre-tax vouchers (that bill failed).**
- **No chaplains allowed in schools as counselors (that bill failed).**
- **ESA and CSA voucher programs not expanded (removed from budget).**
- **Crackdown on virtual schools.** Legislators requested that the IDOE provide a report on the academic readiness of students in virtual schools. (HEA 1515)

# What to Do Next





- Join us! <https://indianacoalitionforpubliced.org/join/>
- Follow us on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/IndianaCoalitionForPublicEducation>
- Pay attention to our calls to action and follow them
- Attend our grassroots meetings – email us to join - [info@indianacoalitionforpubliced.org](mailto:info@indianacoalitionforpubliced.org)
- Volunteer! We could use help on the smallest of things. <https://forms.gle/WTeWhuAPfcTYvCsX7>