



The Referendum Wave Is Coming

What Communities Need To Know

May 6 | 7:00 PM EST | Online

Experts • Best practices • Legal guidance

**Why Are So Many School Districts
Turning to Referendums?**



Intro

Cathy Fuentes-Rohwer



Why Public Schools?

1. Public education is guaranteed by the state constitution.
2. Public schools are open to all.
3. Public schools are transparent and accountable.
4. Public schools are the heart of the community.
5. Public schools are the bedrock of our democracy.



Join Us!

When you join ICPE you help us connect supporters of public schools around the state. Together, we collaborate on education advocacy. We share resources, ideas and actions that support our public schools – the heart of our local communities. Your contribution sustains our collective efforts, especially our nonpartisan lobbying work at the Statehouse.



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Join or Renew

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\$25 Individual Membership	\$50
\$100	\$250
\$300	\$500
\$1,000	\$2,500
\$5,000	\$10,000
\$ Other	USD

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Outline for This Evening

- **Intro:** *Cathy Fuentes-Rohwer - President, ICPE*
- **Why Do Schools Need To Run a Referendum? How We Got Here:**
Joel Hand – General Counsel & Lobbyist for ICPE
- **Best Practices For All Communities Running A Referendum Campaign:**
Robin Winston – Winston/Terrell Group
- **Legal Dos and Don'ts:** *Erik Long – Partner, Ice Miller*
- **Avon Success:** *Kevin Carr – Avon Community Schools*
- **NACS Loss:** *Amber Toole – NW Allen County Schools*
- **Brown County Failure & Success:** *Emily Callahan – Brown County Superintendent*
- **Q and A:** *Panelists will address typed answers in Q&A*
- **Closing Remarks:** *Cathy Fuentes-Rohwer - President, ICPE*



Why Do Schools Need a Referendum? How We Got Here

Joel Hand

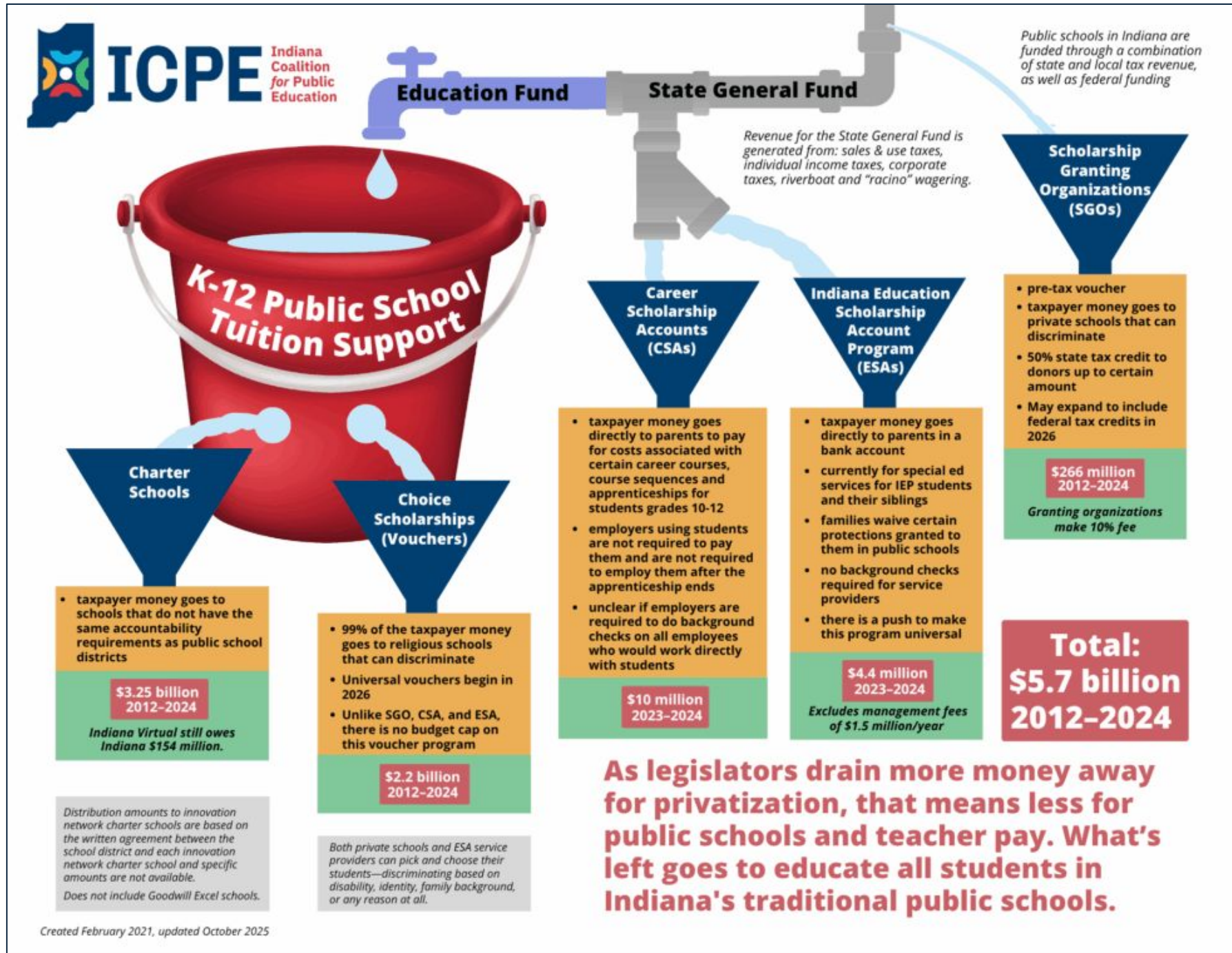
History of how Indiana funds public schools

- Prior to 2008:
 - **100% public funds spent on K-12 went to public schools**
 - Local property taxes (approx 15% of school General Funds)
 - State sales taxes & income taxes (approx 85%)
 - Reliance on local property taxes creates larger discrepancies in funding due to value of property
 - 1993 adopted a funding formula to equalize per-student funding to reduce discrepancies
 - No referenda existed
- **Property Tax Caps (3-2-1%) of 2008**
 - Passed by General Assembly in 2008
 - Adopted as amendment to Indiana Constitution in 2010
 - As a trade-off, State shifted larger responsibility of funding K-12 schools to the State and away from local property taxes.
 - To raise local property tax rates, would have to seek referendum.

K-12 School Enrollment

- Student enrollment in Indiana public schools is relatively stable over period of 2012 - 2022
 - Total public school enrollment averaged just over 1 million
 - 2010 public K-12 enrollment: 1,047,242*
 - 2026 public K-12 enrollment: 1,012,900*
- Private school enrollments grew by approximately 20% 2010 to 2024 †
 - 2025 - 92,000 K-12 private school students including 76,000 using private school vouchers †
 - Starting July 1, 2026, 100% of private school students will be eligible for vouchers
 - * National Center for Education Statistics
 - † Indiana Department of Education

State Funding Is Complicated — Leaky Bucket

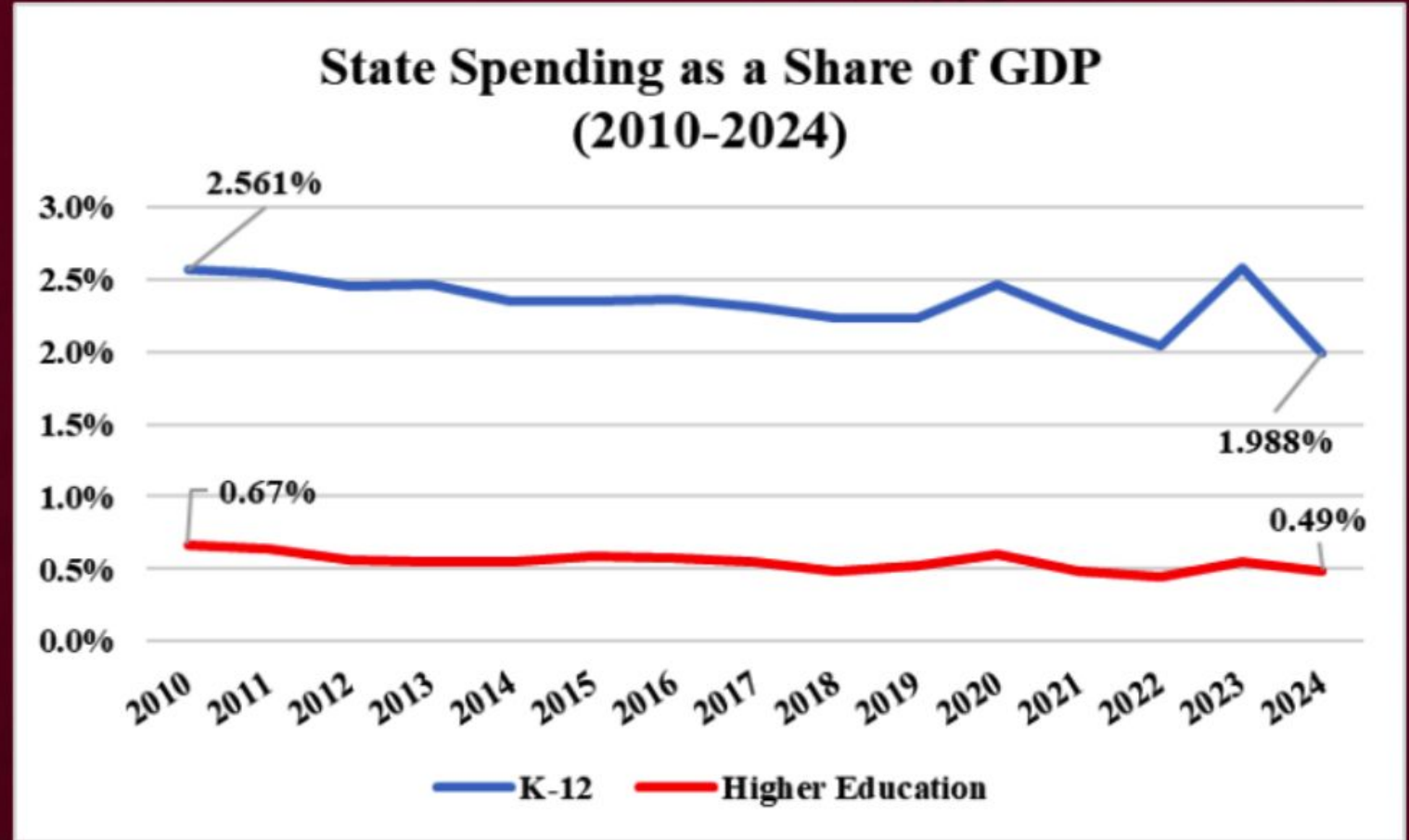




We are not investing in education like we used to in Indiana.

What could we do with \$3 billion more on K-12?

If we spent the same share of our GDP on Education today as we did in 2010, it would mean \$2.99 billion more for K-12 and \$964 million more for Higher Ed



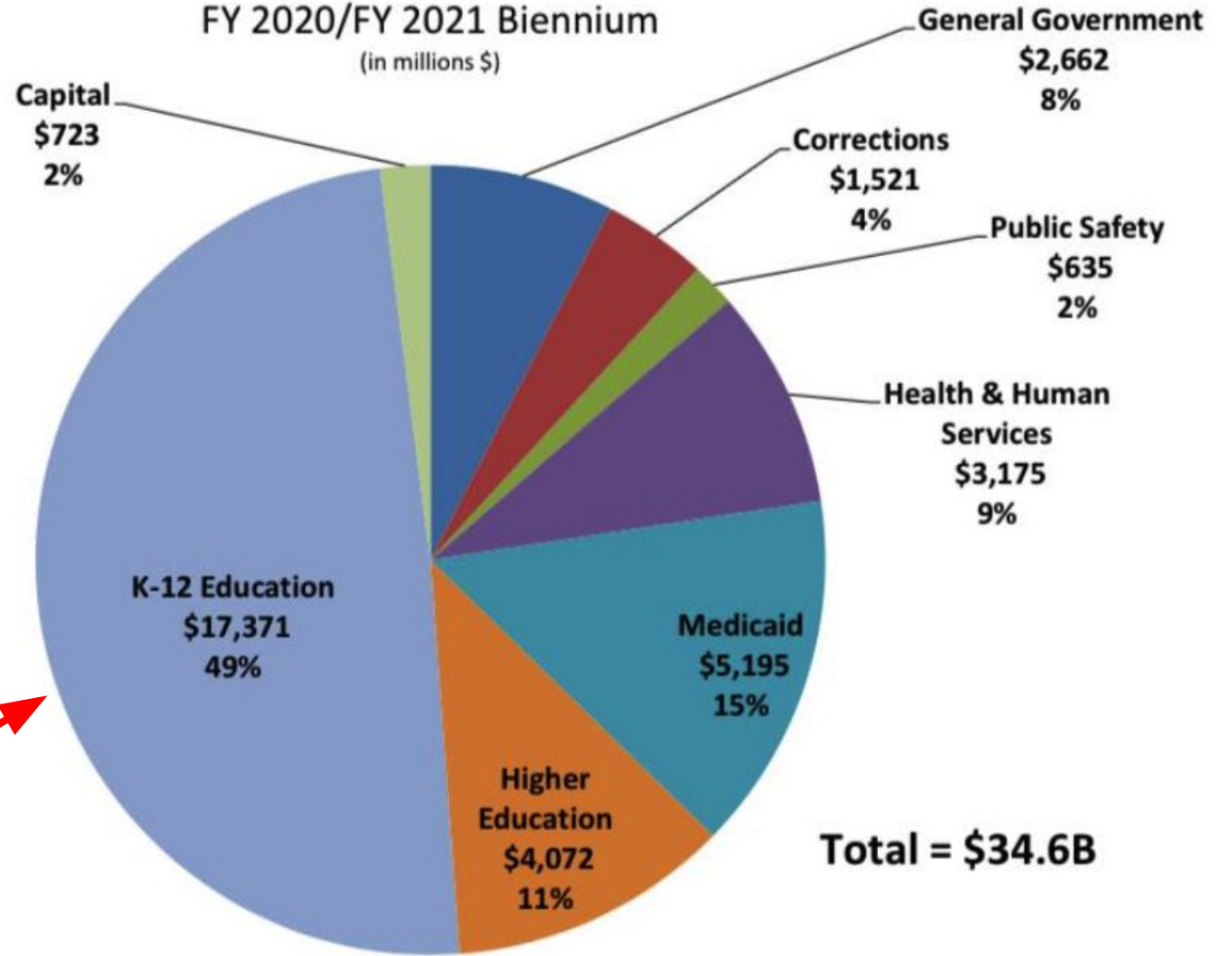
Source: Michael Hicks, Ball State. ICPE State Meeting, Summer 2025.

Where Did My State Tax Dollars Go in 2020-2021?

49% of the budget goes towards K-12 Education.

Includes \$327 million spent on Choice Scholarships (0.018% of budget)

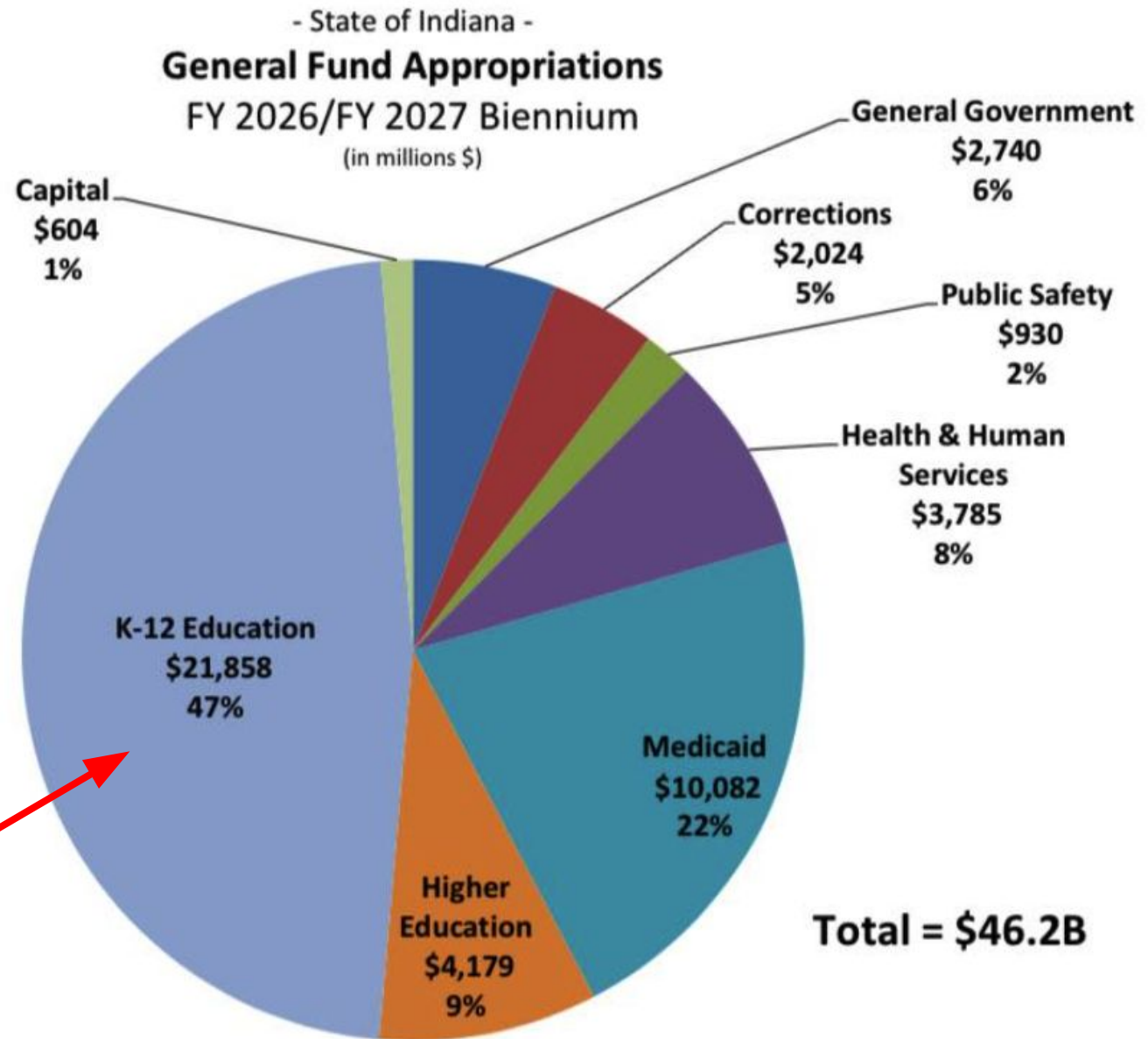
- State of Indiana -
General Fund Appropriations
FY 2020/FY 2021 Biennium
(in millions \$)



Where Do My State Tax Dollars Go?

47% of the budget goes towards K-12 Education.

Includes \$1.22 billion earmarked for Choice Scholarships (0.6% of total state budget).



Effect of Inflation

- Between 2010 and 2026, the rate of inflation has been approximately 51% with an average increase of 2.6% annually.
- What cost \$100 in 2010 would now cost >\$150
- Despite spending more dollars on K-12 education in 2025/26 than we did in 2010/11, according to Dr. Michael Hicks, when adjusted for inflation, we are spending \$100 LESS per student now.
- Equates to approximately 7% reduction in per pupil funding for public school students 2010/11 - 2025/26 school year.



Vouchers Affect All School Districts

IF the state K-12 funding had remained the same and IF this large voucher program didn't exist, how much additional funding would your community school district have had?

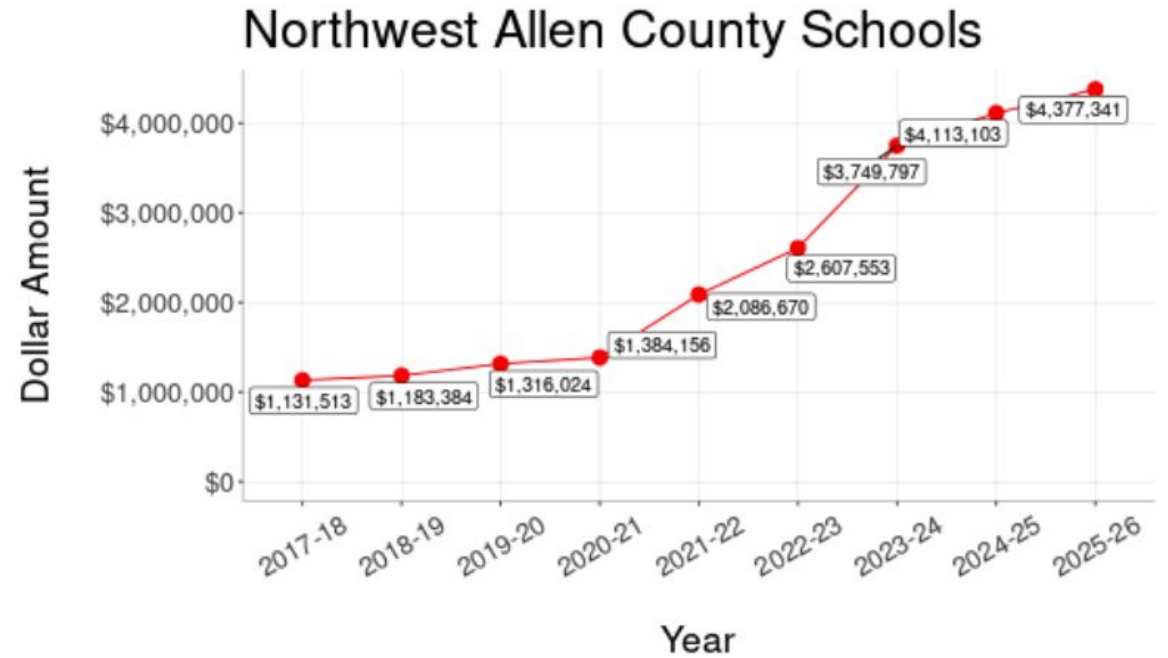
This information represents the district share if voucher money were added to the basic (tuition support) grant. In economics lingo, it's the "opportunity cost" of school choice. Think about it: what could your district have done with the money?

District Share if Basic Grant Dollars Included Indiana Choice Scholarship Money

Browse School Corporations:

Choose From the Drop-Down Menu:

Northwest Allen County Schools

The ICPE logo is repeated at the bottom of the interface, showing the state outline and the text "ICPE Indiana Coalition for Public Education".

Total funds across all years: **\$21,949,541**

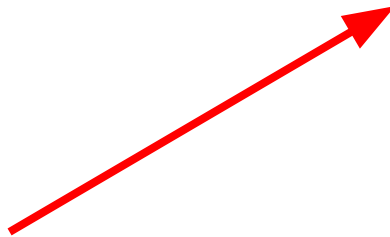


Where Do My State Tax Dollars Go?

Top 40 General Fund Appropriations

	Agn	Agency	Description	FY 2023-2024	FY 2024-2025	Biennial Total	Share of the General Fund Budget
1	700	DOE	Distribution for Tuition Support	9,370,000,000	9,650,000,000	19,020,000,000	41.2%
2	503	OMPP	Medicaid Assistance	4,836,500,000	4,962,900,000	9,799,400,000	21.2%
3	072	INPRS	Teachers' Retirement Fund Distribution	1,066,300,000	1,066,300,000	2,132,600,000	4.6%
4	502	DCS	Family and Children Fund	688,873,384	601,373,384	1,290,246,768	2.8%
5	615	DOC	State Correctional Facility Operations	598,138,820	582,467,382	1,180,606,202	2.6%
6	502	DCS	Child Services Administration	301,452,728	301,452,728	602,905,456	1.3%
7	760	PU	Purdue University - West Lafayette Campus - General Operating	240,323,252	240,323,252	480,646,504	1.0%
8	710	IVTCC	Ivy Tech Community College - General Operating	236,333,680	236,333,680	472,667,360	1.0%
9	615	DOC	Food, Educational, and Medical Services	225,063,624	225,063,624	450,127,248	1.0%
10	100	ISP	Indiana State Police and Motor Carrier Inspection	215,000,000	220,000,000	435,000,000	0.9%
11	750	IU	Indiana University - Bloomington Campus - General Operating	198,999,577	198,999,577	397,999,154	0.9%
12	410	DMH	State Psychiatric Hospital Operations	169,141,147	169,141,147	338,282,294	0.7%
13	719	CHE	21st Century Scholar Awards	166,270,623	166,270,623	332,541,246	0.7%
14	057	SBA	Financial Responsibility and Opportunity Growth Fund	150,000,000	150,000,000	300,000,000	0.6%
15	072	INPRS	Public Safety Pension	140,000,000	130,000,000	270,000,000	0.6%
16	780	BSU	Ball State University - General Operating	132,004,424	132,004,424	264,008,848	0.6%
17	750	IU	IU Indianapolis Campus Operating	128,250,000	128,250,000	256,500,000	0.6%
18	500	DFR	DFR - County Administration	109,116,033	109,116,033	218,232,066	0.5%
19	750	IU	I. U. Schools of Medicine and Dentistry	105,508,772	105,508,772	211,017,544	0.5%
20	719	CHE	Higher Education Award Program	101,425,081	101,425,081	202,850,162	0.4%
21	022	SC	Local Judges' Salaries	100,439,726	100,620,302	201,060,028	0.4%

If we take the \$1.22 billion (the estimated cost of the state's largest voucher program) out of the of Tuition Support and made it a separate line item, it would rank at #5.





Best Practices for all Communities Running a Referendum Campaign

Robin Winston



Legal Dos and Don'ts

Erik Long



Avon Success

Kevin Carr



Northwest Allen County Schools Loss

Amber Toole



Brown County Failure & Success

Emily Callahan

Q&A:
*Panelists will answer
questions posted in the Q&A*



Thank You!



Join us! & Upcoming Events

- Join us! indianacoalitionforpubliced.org/join or scan the code
- Follow us on Facebook.
- Attend our statewide grassroots meetings. The next meeting is Sunday, May 17 at 7pm. Signup at: <https://tinyurl.com/2vb4ys8s> or scan the code.
- Save the date - ICPE Annual Meeting - September 20th This year is a pivotal year for elections and the future of education. Our theme this year will be “I love my public schools and I vote!” #VotePublic Ed. Details to come.



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