



Arizona Voters to Decide on School Voucher Expansion in November 2018

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In 2011, Arizona became the first state to create an Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA) program, allowing parents or guardians of students with disabilities to use state funds, in the form of an ESA, for private school education. The law, which established the ESA, provided funding for private school and is measured at 90 percent of what the state would have paid for the student to attend a public school district or charter school. The law allows parents or guardians to use a prepaid bank card to pay for education-related tuition, fees, textbooks, tutoring, educational therapies, and curriculum. Since its inception, the ESA program has been expanded to cover students meeting other specified criteria, including children who attend failing schools and children who live on an Indian reservation.

In 2017, the state legislature passed and the Governor signed Senate Bill 1431, which was drafted to make all K-12 students eligible to apply for an ESA. Senate Bill 1431 capped the number of new students eligible to receive an ESA at 0.5 percent of the total number of students enrolled in school districts and charter schools per year through the school year 2022-2023. The measure further provided that a student whose family is at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty line would be eligible for an ESA with 100 percent funding, rather than 90 percent funding. Again this percentage was measured against what the state would have paid for a student to attend a public school district or charter school.

Through the initiative process, the State Constitution allows the voters to potentially have the final say on all legislation enacted by the legislature. This provision of the Constitution allows individuals or organizations to propose a referendum by collecting enough signatures equivalent to 5% of the votes cast for Governor at the last gubernatorial election. For 2018 the number of valid signatures required was 75,321. Proponents of the referendum had until 90 days after the 2017 legislative session adjourned to collect signatures. A group calling itself Save Our Schools (SOS) Arizona announced the referendum campaign on May 8, 2017 and by August 8, 2017, SOS Arizona reported that it had filed 111,540 signatures to the Secretary of State's office. Secretary of State, Michele Reagan, announced that referendum proponents submitted enough signatures, certifying the measure for the ballot as Proposition 305. Voters will get to have their say on the proposition on the November 2018 ballot.

A "yes" vote supports upholding the contested legislation, Senate Bill 1431, which was designed to phase in an expansion of the state's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA) program to make all public school students eligible to apply for an ESA.

A "no" vote opposes the contested legislation, Senate Bill 1431, and if the no votes receive the majority, the measure will not become law.

The full text of Senate Bill 1431 is available [here](#).



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