

# SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!

VOTE NO ON THE VOUCHER REFERENDUM - MARCH 17, 2026 PRIMARY ELECTION

## WHAT IS ON THE BALLOT?

Voters in at least 32 Illinois counties will see a non-binding advisory referendum asking whether Illinois should opt into a new federal school voucher program. Although the question is advisory and does not change the law, it is designed to create political pressure and claim public support for vouchers.

## THIS REFERENDUM IS MISLEADING

**Referendum language:** "Should Illinois opt into a federal program that would provide public K-12, private school and homeschool students with privately donated funds for academic needs, such as tutoring and test preparation, educational therapies for students with disabilities, tuition, books, exam fees or for other specified academic needs?"

- The ballot measure doesn't mention vouchers at all, the language refers to "privately donated funds," but the program actually relies on tax credits that reduce public revenue.
- Tax credits mean less money available for public schools, higher education, and other public services.
- Voucher programs divert funding from public schools that are already underfunded.

## ILLINOIS HAS ALREADY LIVED THIS EXPERIMENT

### Under the Invest in Kids voucher tax credit program:

- About \$75 million per year was diverted away from public school students.
- 80% of Illinois public schools remain underfunded under the Evidence-Based Funding formula.
- The state is still roughly \$4 billion short of full EBF funding and is not projected to reach full funding until 2042.

### Voucher programs like Invest in Kids did not improve outcomes and harmed equity:

- They reduced funding for classrooms, staffing, and student supports.
- They increased instability as districts already face the ESSER funding cliff and federal uncertainty.
- They sent public dollars to private and religious schools with little accountability.

### In fact, Invest in Kids worsened equity:

- More than half of Illinois private schools receiving voucher funds had no Black students. Only 28% of voucher dollars went to low-income students, even though two-thirds of recipients were from low-income households.
- Only 13% of voucher schools served any students with disabilities, compared to 100% of public schools.



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## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Vote NO on the voucher referendum on March 17, 2026
- Talk to coworkers, family, and neighbors about what the referendum really does
- Don't be misled by vague ballot language

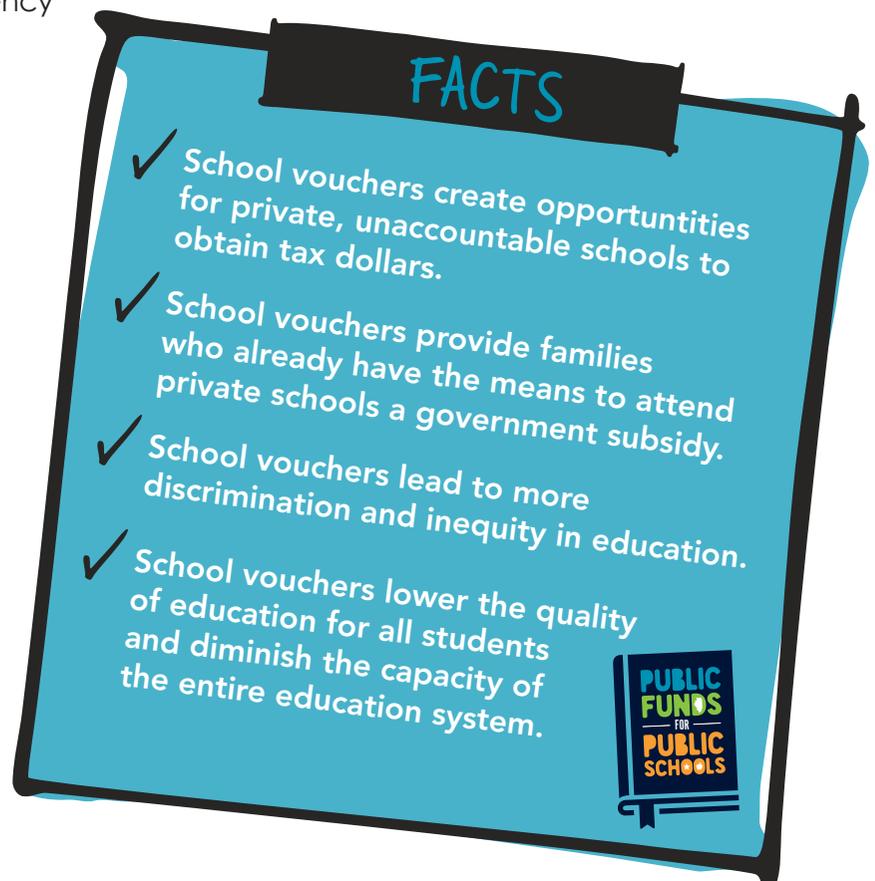
## BOTTOM LINE

Illinois already tried vouchers — and the data is clear: they don't work.

Voucher programs:

- Drain funding from public schools
- Fail to improve academic outcomes
- Increase inequity
- Reduce accountability and transparency

**Public dollars belong in public schools** — where there is accountability, transparency, and a commitment to serving every student.



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