

[Joanne Jacobs](#)

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- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Our School](#)
- [Freelance](#)
- [Contact](#)

You are here: [Home](#) / [Education](#) / Indiana OKs broad voucher bill

Indiana OKs broad voucher bill

May 5, 2011 By [Joanne](#) [7 Comments](#)

The nation's most sweeping [school voucher program](#) — with tuition aid for low- and middle-income families — is now law in Indiana. Gov. Mitch Daniels signed the bill today, along with another bill expanding charter schools.

Parents can choose to use vouchers at private schools that accept state regulation, including religious schools. As family income rises to \$60,000 for a family of four, the voucher's value will go down.

Other voucher systems across the country are limited to lower-income households, children with special needs or those in failing schools.

Indiana's program would be open to a much larger pool of students, including those already in excellent schools. Indiana's program will be limited to just 7,500 students for the first year and 15,000 in the second, a fraction of the state's about 1 million students. But within three years, there will be no limit on the number of children who could enroll.

Indiana will save money on voucher students: Vouchers for elementary and middle school students are capped at \$4,500 and no voucher will equal funding for public-school students.

According to Rick Hess, 60 percent of Indiana schoolchildren will be eligible for a [voucher worth up to 90 percent of public education costs](#). The student must attend a year of public school to qualify for a voucher.

The bill also gives a \$1,000 tax deduction for private-school tuition or the costs of homeschooling. That's expected to cut revenues by \$3 million.

While most [choice advocates are celebrating](#), Cato's Adam Schaeffer argues the law is a "[strategic defeat for educational freedom](#)" because it greatly expands state regulation of participating private schools.

To qualify for vouchers, schools will have to administer state exams and submit data on students' progress, admit students by lottery and "provide good citizenship instruction" that stresses respecting authority, the property of others, the student's parents and home, the student's self and "the rights of others to have their own views and religious beliefs."

What does this mean for religious private schools teaching that one can only be saved by belief in

Jesus Christ?

Private schools that refuse to be regulated will risk losing most of their students, Schaeffer writes.


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About Joanne

Comments

1.  *Soapbox0916* says:
[May 5, 2011 at 2:07 pm](#)


I am guessing that most people here have not had to work with Governor Daniels. I have mixed feelings about Daniels. I have some very serious concerns about Daniels being able to put in the proper structure in place to actually implement school vouchers. I have some insight in to how Daniels actually manages or unfortunately doesn't manage.

This is the personal perspective of someone who formerly worked for state government under the Daniels administration, I admit I was a peon way down, but I still worked with his staff in the Governor's office quite a bit because of the type of job that I had, I worked with rules and legislation as a rulewriter.

Daniels is very good at big picture, extremely general stuff, but I am honestly concerned that Daniels does not understand details well enough for this to succeed. I don't say that lightly. It is like Daniels can see the forest from the trees, but Daniels forgets that trees need leaves or doesn't care enough that trees have leaves. It seems like most people struggle with the big picture, but Daniels is the opposite, he struggles with the details.

Most politicians leave the government workers alone just enough so that government workers can get some things done. I still hear the frustrations from those that work under Daniels administration. Daniels has a habit of getting in the way of the people that know what they are doing when it comes to the details, way worse than typical politicians. So I hope that Daniels leaves the people that can figure out how to implement this voucher program alone enough in order to get it done right.

I am a huge fan of vouchers and I live in Indiana so I am very excited. Don't get me wrong, I very much want this voucher program to be a huge success, but my worries is that the implementation will get screwed up, or worse, problems with implementation of the vouchers will be used by critics of vouchers and therefore keep other states from implementing vouchers. This could be a model for other states to follow or an implementation fail.

2.  *Cardinal Fang* says:
[May 5, 2011 at 2:23 pm](#)