

Forbes

Indiana Voucher Bill is Federalism in Action

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By E.D. KAIN

Conor Friedersdorf [is excited](#) about the new voucher bill [signed into law](#) in Indiana by governor Mitch Daniels. Dana Goldstein [is more skeptical](#), pointing to a number of aspects of the legislation that are counterproductive, such as requiring students to receive permission to attend a class taught by a teacher rated as 'ineffective' two years in a row. And finally, Cato's [Adam Schaeffer thinks](#) the law is little more than a mountain of regulations waiting to crush private schools participating in the voucher program.

They're all probably a bit correct. Personally, I'm a fan of federalism, even though I know it will lead to ideas I don't support. Vouchers, for instance, seem like a pretty Utopian reform, and contra Schaeffer, I think you're pretty much bound to have strings attached to government money. Private schools that don't want government regulation probably shouldn't expect voucher students to attend. That's just the nature of the beast.

More broadly, Dana's concerns reflect the natural result of getting politicians involved in education – especially as involved as they have become in recent years. Again, with public education this is largely an inevitability, but it comes at a cost.

And finally, to Conor's optimism over the Indiana bill, all I can say is "Two cheers for federalism!" We should embrace experimentation across the country, allowing each state to attempt its own reforms and implement its own ideas (I would say "each district, each school"). I may disagree with many of these reforms, but so long as I have a say in my own schools, my own children's education, and democracy is still how we determine the course of our education system, I can't complain too much.

Education is local – I've said it a thousand times. When it stops being local, that's when I start to worry. When the decisions of a few bureaucrats in D.C. and a few billionaires and their charities is radically changing the *national* education system, that's when we start to see large, widespread problems and overreach.