

Legislative Report December 2022

There is a lot going on politically in any lame duck session, and this one is no exception. I'm sure I'm forgetting something. That said, I feel the same way every time I leave my classroom, or my house for that matter. If I've missed some bit of education policy here, please forgive me.

I thought we should open with a piece of good news. Yet [another local poll](#) indicates that 8 of 10 Northeast Ohioans trust their teachers.

It seems as if there should be more good news. There's not.

Senate Bill 178: At a whopping 2100 plus pages, [Senate Bill 178](#) strips citizens of the right to elect a state board to oversee public education in the state. It gives this power instead to an agency controlled by the Governor. Predictably, the bill is supported by [Governor Mike DeWine](#), and [The Fordham Institute](#) (advocates of charters, vouchers, and perennial purveyor of education policy crafted by non-educators). It [passed the Senate](#) on Wednesday December 7th, "a date which will live in infamy," and awaits action in the House.

[OEA has advised a cautious approach](#), arguing that hurrying to restructure the oversight of education during the lame duck is problematic. [Honesty for Ohio Education](#) seeks to stop SB178, which they see as a state takeover of public education.

If you read one thing on the potential implications of this bill, [read this piece](#) by Olmsted Falls Superintendent, Dr. Jim Lloyd.

If you read another thing, [make it this](#) op-ed from education advocate, man behind the DeRolph case, (and one of my personal heroes), Bill Phillis.

Frank LaRose, Ohio's Secretary of State, has turned himself into the master of solving problems that do not exist. Check out his Public Integrity Division, which he created to focus on election integrity and eliminate voter fraud, a problem that is [essentially nonexistent statewide](#). LaRose might've been better off taking on the very real threat of a visit from [Krampus](#).

Now he's at it again. LaRose wants to protect the Ohio Constitution from special interests (not a proven problem), by requiring a supermajority of 60% +1 of voters to agree to state constitutional amendments. The right to amend the constitution with a simple majority has been the law in Ohio for more than 100 years. His plan, House Joint Resolution 6, dramatically limits the rights of average citizens. [More than 140 groups oppose the plan](#), including [OEA](#).

Vouchers: [Senate Bill 368](#) is one of a few bills in Columbus to [expand voucher availability](#). The bill would increase homeschool tax credits from \$250 to \$2,000, and give \$5,500 to students in kindergarten through eighth grade and \$7,500 to high school students to attend private schools. It is unclear if there is a current motivation to get any of these bills over the line in the current lame duck session.

Further Disenfranchisement: It is very likely that [a bill requiring photo ID](#)'s in order to vote will pass during the lame duck. Opponents have consistently criticized these measures because they tend to disenfranchise poor, minority voters. School districts generally oppose them because of the implications that they may have on the passage of funding issues.

Anti-LGBTQ+ Resolution: The state school board's resolution opposes federal Title IX anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ students and endorses that local school districts disobey these protections. The board will hear testimony on Monday December 12th, and vote on the measure on Tuesday December 13th. Honesty for Ohio Education has provided a [mechanism for contacting the state board](#) regarding this issue.

Eliminating Retention: As reported here before, Elyria's Representative Gayle Manning sponsored House Bill 497 to end the retention component of the 3rd grade guarantee. The legislation has already passed the House. Unfortunately, the Chair of the Senate Education Committee, Senator Andy Brenner, has focused instead on the wildly unpopular SB178, and the state takeover of public education (see above). HB497 will be [heard in committee](#) on Tuesday, December 13th with invited testimony only & potential amendments. It is unclear if the bill will be brought to a vote going forward, or if Brenner will let it die. If you'd like to contact Senator Brenner to encourage him to move on this legislation, you may do so [here](#). You may also contact him via Twitter [@andrewbrenner](#). Alas, I am unable to do so due to reasons I'd rather not discuss.



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