

# One Wisconsin Now: Has private school voucher pander paid off for John Humphries?

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*Candidate for Superintendent of State Public Schools Snags His Largest Campaign Contribution, Tied to Major Backer of Private Voucher Schools, Days After Proposing Massive Increase in State Subsidy to Private Voucher Schools*

MADISON, Wis. — On January 26, 2017 the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported John Humphries proposed increasing state funding for students attending less accountable private and religious schools. On January 31, 2017 the Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce (MMAC) made a \$10,000 contribution to Humphries campaign. The donation was made possible, according to reporting by WisPolitics.com, by a \$20,000 contribution to MMAC from Agustin Ramirez, a major supporter of voucher schools who is proposing to build and operate his own \$40 million private school in Milwaukee.

“John Humphries’ announcement of a plan that would raise local property taxes and ship over \$100 million more state tax dollars to less accountable voucher schools looks like a bad deal for taxpayers but a great deal for him,” commented One Wisconsin Now Research Director Jenni Dye “Mere days after his transparent political pander, pro-voucher money is on the move and \$10,000 of it finds its way into John Humphries’ campaign coffers.”

According to information from the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau, had the plan Humphries recently unveiled to increase state funding for less accountable private voucher and charter schools to the same per pupil level as K-12 public schools been in place for the 2015-17 biennium, state taxpayers would have taken a huge hit. Not only would the scheme require an additional \$110.4 million of state funds, but local property taxes would also have jumped by over \$75 million.

While taxpayers would have been left holding the bag, operators of private charter and religious schools taking students through the voucher program would have reaped the windfall. According to news reports Ramirez, the MMAC contributor, is proposing [to build and open a \\$40 million private religious school](#) in Milwaukee. He has indicated he may seek to participate in the taxpayer funded voucher program.

This is not the first time Humphries engaged in political pandering on the voucher program. In his chase for campaign cash, Humphries has been [outspoken in his support for Michigan billionaire Betsy DeVos](#), Donald Trump’s manifestly unqualified Secretary of Education. Previously, DeVos helped fund and run the American Federation for Children (AFC), a pro-voucher special interest group that has spent over \$5 million to help their favored politicians in Wisconsin. The DeVos family has also made nearly \$500,000 in individual contributions to Gov. Walker and voucher supporting state legislators and candidates.

Humphries has also attempted to leverage his commitment to take money from public schools and give it to less accountable private voucher schools for the support of Michael Grebe, chair of Gov. Scott Walker’s gubernatorial and presidential campaigns and former head of the massive right-wing Bradley Foundation. Based on a review of documents from the Bradley Foundation and information the organization filed with the IRS, [One Wisconsin Institute exposed the organization](#) overseen by Grebe spent over \$108 million in support of groups helping to advance the education privatization agenda he favors between 2005 and 2014.

Dye concluded, “John Humphries is working overtime to make the private school voucher program payoff. But it sure looks like it’s all about boosting his political ambitions and his campaign fundraising, not help kids.”