



Utah Amendment G: Ending the Constitutional Dedication of All Income Tax Revenues to Education



They say:

We say:

Will Amendment G Mean More Money for Education?

If approved, Amendment G triggers HB 357, which requires that education funding will always keep up with inflation and enrollment growth, even in times of recession. That did not happen after the Great Recession of 2008-2009, which was why it took eight years to restore per-student, inflation-adjusted funding to its pre-recession level.

This is a great idea, so why isn't it part of the Constitutional Amendment? And since it's not, how do we know it's a promise that will be kept? There is nothing to stop future Legislatures from changing HB 357. And why wouldn't they change or eliminate it in a future recession when they are faced with the Sophie's choice of cutting either education funding or life-saving social and healthcare services in the midst of a downturn?

Flexibility/Rebalancing

State budget writers have long sought greater flexibility to move moneys around and rebalance the Education Fund (which relies on the income tax, which has been growing relatively quickly) and General Fund (which relies mostly on sales tax revenues, which have been growing more slowly due to the economy's shift from goods (which are mostly taxed) to services, which are mostly not taxed).

Greater flexibility means the ability to shift up to \$600 million annually out of what is already the worst-funded education system in the nation. Utah's K-12 public education system has ranked last in the nation in per-pupil investment since 1988. Funding should be increased, not diverted, so that we can address growing gaps between haves and have-nots and gaps between whites and non-whites that are larger than nationally.

Will Amendment G Also Mean More Money for Social Services for Children and Utahns with Disabilities?

Social services – especially for children and Utahns with disabilities – are underfunded and need more resources. Proponents of Amendment G want to have the flexibility to divert revenues now dedicated to education into social services for children and Utahns with disabilities.

The fact that proponents are promising that Amendment G will mean more money for education AND more money for social services should be a big red flag for voters. How does the math work on that? Where will these additional revenues come from?

The real reason that both social services and education are so dangerously underfunded is the decades of tax cutting that have left Utah's overall taxation level lower than since the 1960s. We should stop trying to fix this problem by robbing Peter to pay Paul and instead restore some revenues in a targeted and fair way, as was proposed by the original Our Schools Now initiative, which we supported together with the business community and education advocates.