

property taxes, which currently ensure that districts inhabited by “haves” get much more money than districts inhabited by “have-nots”—a system that perpetuates social inequality, stunts the opportunities of students from poor families, and fosters social antagonisms and the cynicism of despair.

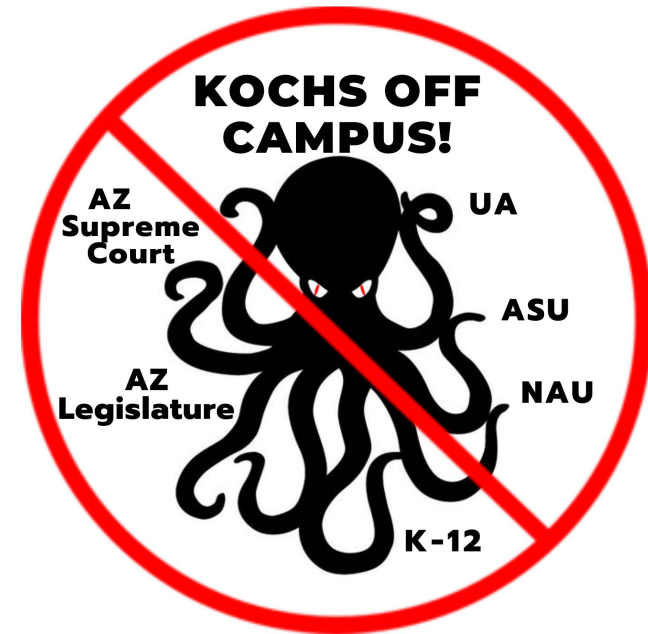
Privatizing our public schools incrementally, which is what has been happening in AZ and in many other states, is NOT the way to improve education. It IS the way to continue splitting American society apart even further, to guarantee a dark future for our society, and to help destroy what democracy we still enjoy.

The Koch network also has:

- Attacked teachers’ unions
- Helped create a school-to-prison pipeline
- Blocked the refinancing of student loans and Pell grants
- Supported cuts to the Pell grant program
- Sneaked the UA Freedom Center’s biased course into Arizona high schools
- Empowered the Freedom Center to write standards for civics education in Arizona

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CHARLES KOCH – ENEMY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Charles Koch and his hyperwealthy allies are out to privatize everything but the police, the military, and the courts. They believe in monetizing everything—and in making as much money as possible for themselves and their friends.

One of the main targets of these “privateers” is the public school system. Their strategy is to attack public schools for allegedly “failing” and simultaneously to try to ensure that they truly *will* fail by opposing adequate funding of public education at the state level. We are seeing this pincers strategy play out right now in Arizona. The AZ

Supreme Court, stacked by Koch operative then-Governor Ducey, blocked or overturned citizen initiatives that would give public schools the money they need (such as Prop 208, the Invest in Education Act).

Meanwhile, the AZ State Legislature, staffed with Koch minions and working hand in glove with the Supreme Court, ignores citizen initiatives rejecting voucher programs and defiantly adopts bills opening vouchers to all. The result is that more and more of the already inadequate state funding of public education is being diverted to private schools, home schoolers, and charter schools, further reducing the money available to public schools for doing the job that their underpaid teachers and overworked staff are bravely trying to do.

In addition, the State Legislature, with the full support of Koch and his allies, has been multiplying bills that treat public school teachers as the enemy, on whom one must spy continuously, who must be checked and controlled at every turn, who might (heaven forbid) introduce information or ideas into their students' heads that the parents of the students dislike.

Is this vision of total parental control consistent with a democracy? Isn't democracy about exposure to multiple viewpoints, about the give-and-take of a free society, about children growing up to think for themselves, and not just parrot what their parents say? And doesn't a functioning democracy rely on an EDUCATED populace, that knows the full history of the country, warts and all?

Indeed, public education exposes—or should expose—our children to people who are NOT just like them and to ideas they may NOT have encountered at home. This is all to the good, since when they grow up, they will be going out into a diverse world full of all kinds of people and opinions, and they will have to deal with that diversity. Cloistered minds that have been over-protected from difference and diversity will be ill-prepared for adult life, at least in a democracy -- as opposed to a tyranny where everyone is expected to toe the party line.

Meanwhile, the ginned-up hostility to our teachers, along with the poor pay and working conditions, is making it hard to retain teachers in AZ or to hire them in the first place. Thousands of K-12 teaching positions are unfilled, and teachers are voting with their feet by decamping to other states where they are better paid and not treated as enemies. Legislators respond by decreasing the requirements to be a teacher. Of course, this suits the wrecker's strategy of Koch and his allies—a strategy that tries to turn a supposed “failure” of public schools into a reality, thereby “justifying” the replacement of public schools with a far more expensive and unequal, far less accountable and democratic non-system of privatized education.

Yes, AZ public education could be improved, notably by paying teachers a great deal more, by respecting their work, and by ensuring that all school districts are equally well-funded. This means decoupling school funding from