

## Warren Petersen Extremism Spotlight

**Petersen claimed Arizona's school voucher program does not cost taxpayers anything (it costs over \$900 million a year).** In her 2023 State of the State address, Gov. Hobbs called for accountability over the state's education savings accounts (ESA) program. ESAs function as publicly-funded vouchers for private education.. Petersen responded that Hobbs was out of touch and that none of his constituents have contacted him regarding ESAs. Petersen claimed, "There is a lot of misinformation about ESAs that have been spread, cost has been one of them. ESAs cost about \$7,500 on average, to educate a child in public schools is about \$14,000, so there's a large tax savings to the taxpayer." After universal expansion, ESA vouchers are on track to cost Arizona taxpayers over \$900 million this school year, nearly 1400% higher than initially projected. Most of the recipients never sent their child to public schools and were previously self-financing their private education. [AZ Mirror, [12/11/2023](#); AZ Family, [1/15/2024](#)]

**Petersen tried to dodge questions from the U.S. Department of Justice about allegations he enacted a voter suppression law with "discriminatory intent."** In 2023, Speaker Ben Toma and state Senate President Warren Petersen attempted to avoid being deposed about their motives for backing legislation making it more difficult to register to vote. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected Toma and Petersen's claim of legislative privilege without comment. The U.S. Department of Justice and civil rights groups are challenging the laws, contending they "amount to intentional race discrimination in voting," and have sought to question Toma and Petersen to buttress their arguments. The voter laws require proof of citizenship to vote for president and require county recorders to forward to the attorney general the names of people who are suspected of trying to register to vote without being citizens, among other provisions creating barriers to voting. The Justice Department and groups seeking to void the laws want to know what evidence legislators identified that non-citizens had voted, whether the legislators considered if the laws would affect certain groups of voters more than others, and what communications they had with outside groups regarding the purpose or effects of the laws. Toma and Petersen refused to provide certain documents and declined to answer questions, objecting to disclosing "private conversations with other legislators or third parties about the voting laws." [Arizona Daily Star, [11/27/2023](#)]