

TABOR NOW

LOWER TAXES. MORE JOBS.

TABOR and Colorado Schools

As they did when the last Taxpayers Bill of Rights initiative was on the ballot in 2006, those opposed to giving voters greater say over government spending point to Colorado as an example of all the terrible things that are caused by empowering voters in this way. Specifically, though the new Taxpayer Bill of Rights initiative does not amend the current process for the approval of school budgets in Maine, the Maine Education Association and others have argued that Colorado's schools have suffered as a consequence of that state's TABOR provision.

But have they? Here's what the data says:

		Maine	Colorado
Spending	2006 Per-pupil spending, adjusted for regional cost differences (EPE)	\$12,985	\$8,514
Demographic Data	2007 Percent of children with at least one parent with a postsecondary degree (EPE)	49.2%	51.1%
	Percent of children whose parents are fluent English speakers (EPE)	96.7%	85.6%
Student Achievement	Percent rated Proficient, 4th Grade Math, 2007 NAEP (EPE)	41.8%	41.2%
	Percent rated Proficient, 8th Grade Math, 2007 NAEP (EPE)	34.1%	37.4%
	Percent rated Proficient, 4th Grade Reading, 2007 NAEP (EPE)	35.8%	36.2%
	Percent rated Proficient, 8th Grade Reading, 2007 NAEP (EPE)	36.9%	34.6%
	High Test Scores (3 or above) on 2007 Advanced Placement Tests per 100 11 th and 12 th graders (EPE)	13.5%	20.1%
	State average SAT Scores, Class of 2005* (College Board)	Verbal - 508 Math - 520	Verbal - 508 Math - 520
Student Outcomes	Percent of Population 25 or older who have completed high school, 2006 (NCES)	88.9%	88.1%
	Percent of Population 25 or older who have completed a Bachelor's degree, 2006 (NCES)	16.9%	22.2%
	Percent of Population 25 or older who have completed a Graduate or Professional degree, 2006 (NCES)	9.0%	12.3%

*Beginning in 2006, all Maine 11th graders were required to take the SAT. 2005 scores are therefore more comparable to those of other states.

EPE = Editorial Projects in Education (Education Week), NCES = National Center for Education Research, U.S. Dept. of Education

What is the conclusion? Maine spends 52% more per pupil than Colorado, yet its K-12 achievement is no better, and is often worse than Colorado's, even though Colorado has far more students from non-English-speaking families. Far from suffering under TABOR, Colorado has demonstrated that its K-12 educational system, despite spending less, can compete with states spending far more, such as Maine.

If TABOR is supposedly so destructive and Colorado's schools are supposedly so bad, why doesn't the data show that? For all the money Maine is spending, why aren't our schools doing any better than Colorado's?