

Whose Team Are You Really On: The Party's, Or the One Paying Your School Tax Bill?



STEVEN

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We've become a tribal electorate. Most of us vote to protect the team we consider ours, trusting that our team's leaders are working in our interest because that's supposed to be the deal. It's not an irrational instinct — it's how representative government is supposed to work, when it's working.

The problem isn't *tribalism* itself. **It's what happens when the leaders of your tribe quietly stop serving the people who put them there, and the loyalty keeps flowing anyway, out of habit.**

We're not writing this to relitigate what it means to be a Republican or a Democrat in 2026 — both parties have shifted from where they stood a

generation ago, and that's a longer conversation than this piece. **We're narrowing to one question: on property taxes and public education funding specifically, who has Concord actually been serving, and does that match what most Charlestown, Newport, and Unity voters think they're getting when they vote for "fiscal conservatism" or "lower taxes"?**

Before the record, one point we've made before and want to restate plainly: **the part of your tax bill you actually control by voting at town meeting has barely moved.** The New Hampshire Municipal Association's own analysis puts it directly — without the roughly \$3 billion the state has shifted onto local governments over the past decade, the statewide property-tax levy today would be lower than it was ten years ago. Local spending increases, across schools, towns, and counties combined, were not large enough to explain the decade's tax growth on their own. Of that \$3 billion, about \$2.1 billion — 70% — landed on school districts specifically. In plain terms: it isn't your neighbors' votes driving your tax bill up. **It's Concord's choices. Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP.**

Here's the record on those choices, with the party responsible for each piece named plainly:

The state's own contribution is shrinking, on a schedule, written into the budget by the Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP-controlled legislature and signed by Republican Governor Kelly Ayotte. The Hold Harmless Grant — genuinely state-funded aid, not a local tax relabeled — is being phased down from \$59.4 million to \$47.6 million to \$35.7 million, reaching zero by 2034. That's not an accident of a bad budget year. It's the **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP** legislative majority's own choice, years in advance.

Meanwhile, that same Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP-controlled legislature cut the revenue that could have covered the gap. Business tax rate reductions passed session after session since 2015 cost the state an estimated \$795 million to \$1.17 billion in forgone revenue. In 2025, the **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP** legislature and Gov. Ayotte fully repealed the Interest and Dividends Tax — a tax that primarily fell on investment income held by wealthier residents. Overall state revenue available for education and the general fund dropped 9.4% from 2024 to 2025 after inflation.

At the same time, that legislature capped how much your own town can vote to raise to cover the difference. HB 1300, backed by the **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP** majority and signed by Gov. Ayotte, requires a 3/5 supermajority for Charlestown's own voters to approve a school budget above an inflation-plus-growth formula — a higher bar than the simple majority that decided every budget before it. HB 1610, which passed on a near party-line vote (183 of 186 Yes votes were Republican), cut school districts' emergency reserve fund cap from 5% to 3% and canceled existing reserve authorizations, removing the cushion districts use to absorb costs no formula can predict.

And the towns with the least need are the ones least affected. In 2011, a **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP** legislative supermajority — 288 to 103 in the House that session — **wrote and passed the law letting wealthier, high-property-value towns keep their surplus Statewide Education Property Tax collections instead of redistributing them to property-poor towns.** The state Supreme Court, with a bench now made up entirely of Republican-governor appointees, upheld that rule in 2025. It's the current **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP** majority defending and preserving it today. Charlestown, meanwhile, carries one of the highest property tax rates in the state.

Meanwhile, a separate voucher program keeps growing, entirely on party-line votes. The Education Freedom Account program was

created in 2021 by a **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP**-controlled legislature. In June 2025, the House passed SB 295 — removing the income cap entirely — by a vote of 190 to 178, with every single Yes vote coming from a **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP** and not one Democrat supporting it. The program has grown from roughly \$27 million when income-capped to an estimated \$50 million this school year, with projections up to \$102 million annually at full enrollment — all from the same Education Trust Fund that’s supposed to fund adequacy aid.

And now, the legal backstop that’s forced any of this accountability at all is itself being targeted by the same party. The Republican Attorney General’s office, under Gov. Ayotte, is formally asking the Supreme Court to overturn the Claremont decisions — the rulings that require the state to fund an adequate education in the first place. **Republican/Free State/MAGA/GOP Rep. Steven Smith (R), Deputy Speaker and a candidate for Speaker of the House, has said publicly he wants Claremont overturned — the same Rep. Smith who, in his own writing, called the \$4,265 base grant “the legal obligation” when that’s the exact figure courts ruled unconstitutional. Up is not down, and down is not up. At least not in our world.**

Which brings us back to the real question. If your own representative’s words, on the record, cost you money — if the number he calls “the floor” is actually the number courts already threw out — does the letter next to his name still decide your vote? Every piece of the record above points the same direction, and it has one party’s name on nearly all of it: less obligation on the state, less room for local voters to compensate, and continued protection for the towns and revenue sources that need protection least. Whatever you call that platform, it isn’t “lower taxes for

the average homeowner.” It’s a shift of the bill toward the property owners and taxpayers with the least capacity to negotiate their way out of it, dressed up as a fight against your own neighbors’ spending.

This doesn’t require you to change parties, and it doesn’t require you to agree with us on anything else. **It requires one thing: judging your own representative’s record on this one issue, on its own terms, separate from whatever loyalty otherwise feels automatic. If property taxes and school funding are genuinely burdening you and your neighbors, the record above is the record — not our opinion of it, but the votes, the statutes, and the numbers themselves. Vote your tribe on everything else if you want to. On this one, at least until the burden of state mandates gets handed back to the state that created them, look at what’s actually been done to your tax bill, and by whom.**



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