

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

Voucher Meeting With DeWine, Speaker 'Productive,' Says Senate President

Senate [President Larry Obhof](#) said he's "cautiously optimistic" following a meeting with [Gov. Mike DeWine](#) and [Speaker Larry Householder](#) over the future of the state's school voucher program.

The "Big Three" met Wednesday morning for 90 minutes to discuss the current impasse between the two chambers over the EdChoice Scholarship Program, among other issues.

Without legislative action by April 1, the list of schools in which students are eligible to receive performance-based vouchers will grow from more than 500 to more than 1,200. Legislators have already delayed that deadline after they failed to reach a compromise by the initial Feb. 1 expansion date. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, February 21, 2020](#))

"I thought it a was productive," Sen. Obhof (R-Medina) said of the meeting. "It was good to get together and restart some of these conversations. Here in the Senate, we're focused as we have been on doing what we think is best for the children of Ohio and their families. I remain cautiously optimistic we'll be able to work something out that's amenable to everybody."

He cautioned that disagreement remains between the Senate, which has favored maintaining school performance-based vouchers in its proposal ([HB 9](#)), and the House, which has authored its own plan ([SB 89](#)) to base voucher eligibility solely on family income.

Asked if progress was made at the meeting, Sen. Obhof replied: "I think so, but it was the beginning of a longer conversation. But it was good to get that started. I feel pretty good today."

He declined to speculate on the timeline for reaching a compromise.

"We're not doing another extension and I've been pretty clear about that for a couple of weeks," Sen. Obhof said. "I think we'll work productively together, and we'll see where we end up, but I'm not going to try to guess about how long things will take."

"What's most important is making sure we collaborate and work to arrive at what we all agree is the right public policy for the children of the state of Ohio," he added.

Speaker Householder also previously stated that the House would not be in favor of another extension.

Gov. DeWine for more than a week has voiced his desire to meet with the two legislative leaders, saying he hoped to play a role in sealing a deal. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, February 19, 2020](#))

The governor said Wednesday prior to the meeting the legislature needs to come to a resolution on the issue in the near future.

"It's important that people have notice of what the rules are going to be," he said. "I think it's important for our public schools. I think it's also important to parents."