

# Don Perl: Chicanery under a cup -- the dark side of Proposition 119

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By [Don Perl](#) |

Dear Coloradans:

Remember going to a summer carnival and being waved over to a booth manned by a mysterious magician and then invited to decipher his sleight of hand? There they were, three elaborate cups with a multi-colored marble to one side.

“Follow the marble,” says the magician, and you watch attentively as he first puts the marble under one of the cups and then watch again as his hands become a blur as the cups duck in and around each other. “You win a prize if you know where the marble is,” comes the challenge with a hint of a sneer.

You followed attentively and are sure you’ve zoned in on the marble. “It’s right there,” and you point. But the cup is empty, and you feel empty too.

Where is the marble?

Let’s say that the marble represents state finances, our tax dollars, impacted by Proposition 119, should that proposition become law. The magician giveth, and the magician taketh away.

The ballot initiative presents the question: “Shall state taxes be increased \$137,600,000 from retail marijuana sales ...?” The increase in state revenues is estimated at \$35,000,000, but for just for the fiscal year 2021-2022.

And wait! That won’t even be enough for the newly created fund known as LEAP (Learning Enrichment and Academic Progress). That fund will need approximately \$21,000,000 more for fiscal year 2021-2022.

Then state expenditures for the fund will balloon to \$109,100,000 for the following fiscal year. Where will all that money come from?

The proposition provides for taking approximately 21 million and then 22 million in the next two fiscal years from the State Land Trust, monies which are supposedly earmarked constitutionally for public schools only.

Where is the multicolored marble now, and so where will all that money go?

The Proposition creates an independent board which has free reign to contract with private tutoring and other for-profit services. Thus, we would have a new bureaucracy, and although housed in the Colorado Department of Education, would operate totally independent of any government agency.

That sneer we sensed on the magician's lips, could that be the look of a grifter? Is that person perhaps looking for a more spacious tent to house others of similar mind?

Without oversight, how will we know? Doesn't this feel like an irresponsible allocation of our tax dollars? And who is looking out for the common good of public education?

And who is this magician backing the Proposition?

I learned from our colleagues at Advocates for Public Education Policy (A4PEP.org) that the magician consists of the Gary Foundation and Investment Funds, and the 76 Group, a conservative think tank.

Almost \$1,000,000 changed hands to gather signatures for the ballot initiative.

A fair question to ask of this magician, "Whose best interests do you have at heart? Would it be the common good of public education? Or perhaps something more deceptive, even sinister?"

So many reasons to vote NO on Proposition 119. Let's keep that multi-colored marble earmarked for public education!

*— Don Perl is a retired educator from both Greeley-Evans School District 6 and the University of Northern Colorado. He is on the advisory board of A4PEP, or Advocates for Public Education Policy, an organization dedicated to advocate for healthy policies for public education, and has also written extensively on standardized testing.*