

“Arkansas Deserves a Better ROI,” by Dr. Chris Jones

During the last presidential election, Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders stood firm in her support of Donald Trump. It made sense politically—after all, she served as his press secretary, and many Arkansans voted for her not because of her record, but because of her connection to him.

But loyalty doesn't mean much in Trump's world.

When deadly tornadoes ripped through Arkansas this spring, Sanders asked for federal aid to help with recovery efforts. Arkansas GOP Congressmen and Senators also joined in urging President Trump to lend a helping hand.

Trump said no. His reasoning? States should take care of themselves.

So much for loyalty. So much for leadership.

Adding to the strain, the Arkansas Department of Finance just reported that state revenues are down more than 15%. Some of that is due to tornado-related delays in tax collection. But a big part of it is self-inflicted: Sanders and the Republican-led supermajority legislature slashed the top income and corporate tax rates, prioritizing relief for those who need it least. In plain terms, Arkansas gave millionaires a tax break and left working families with fewer public resources.

And while we're on the topic of priorities, let's talk about public schools.

Sanders' LEARNS Act, which will be fully phased in by 2026-27, channels taxpayer money away from public education and into private school vouchers. When universal, it could siphon tens of millions annually from our already underfunded public schools—schools that serve the vast majority of Arkansas students.

If you're a parent in Morrilton, Camden, Mena, Fort Smith, Harrison or Helena hoping your child can read by third grade and graduate with a shot at a good job, LEARNS a slow-moving disaster.

That's not all. Local libraries—essential learning hubs in rural and urban communities alike—face growing financial uncertainty. Teachers, the backbone of any decent school system, are still underpaid and overstretched. And yet, the state seems committed to defunding the very things that give regular Arkansans a shot at a better future.

Now add to that the mystery mega-prison project in Franklin County.

The governor is pushing a multi-billion-dollar mega-prison in a county where residents and even Republican legislators oppose it. There's no transparency on cost, contracts,

or need. Meanwhile, the state can't seem to fund basic infrastructure after a storm or guarantee a quality education for every child.

This isn't sound governance. It's bad business.

In economic terms, we call this *Return on Investment*—ROI. You put something in and expect to get something back.

Arkansas voters gave Sarah Sanders the job. In return, they've gotten crumbling schools, stalled disaster recovery, and billionaires laughing all the way to the bank. For working people, the ROI is deep in the red.

If this were a company, we have a good idea what the Board of Directors would do to her job.

Arkansas deserves leadership that actually delivers. Maybe we'll get that in 2026.

Share your thoughts and comments at chrisjoneslistens@gmail.com.