

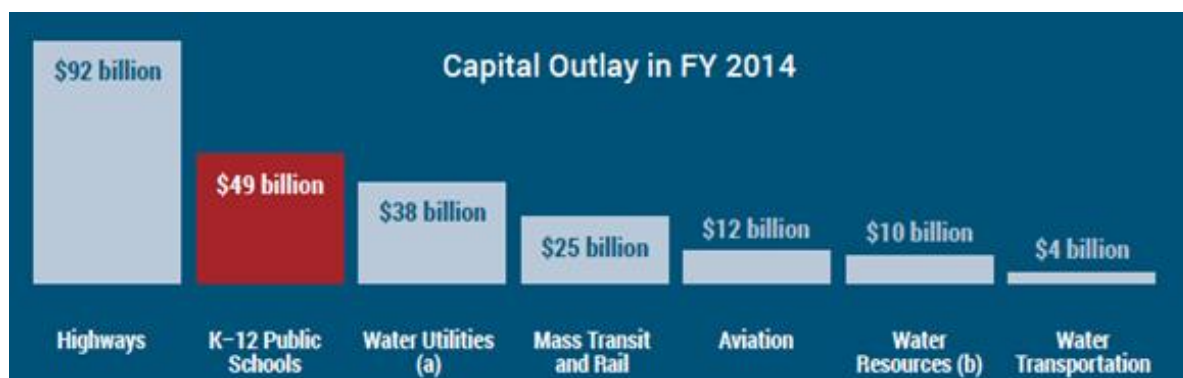


Dear Education Reporter:

With over 50 million children soon heading back to school, the national [\[Re\]Build America's School Infrastructure Coalition \(B.A.S.I.C\)](#) is fighting for federal funding to fix and modernize our nation's crumbling public school facilities.

10 things you need to know:

1. Scale of the issue. Public schools are the second largest public sector of America's infrastructure, after roads and highways. Each weekday, 1 in 6 Americans – more than 55 million children and adults – set foot in a public school. Like roads, bridges, water works, the power grid, and ports, public school facilities are core infrastructure.

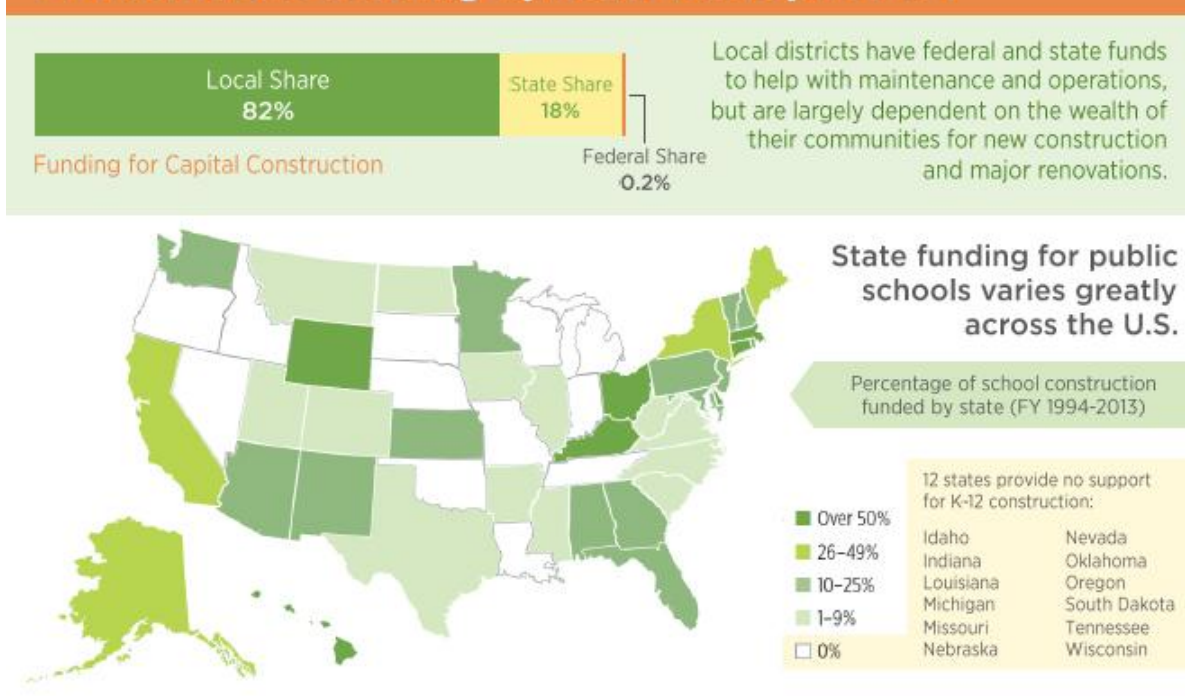


Water Utilities (a) includes water supply and wastewater treatment facilities. *Water Resources (b)* includes water containment systems (dams, levees, reservoirs, and watersheds) and sources of freshwater (lakes and rivers). **Sources:** Based on data from the Office of Management and Budget and the Census Bureau, CBO Public Spending on Transportation and Water Infrastructure 1956-2014, March 2015 report. K-12 public school data is 20-year average annual capital outlay for school construction in 2014\$--from State of our Schools 2016 report, of U.S. Census of Governments data.

2. The need for federal support is urgent. Local communities and states are currently spending \$49 billion a year to build and modernize public school facilities, but that's \$38 billion a year less than they need. This \$38 billion investment gap impacts education, health, safety, security, and the environment. Local districts already had \$425 billion in capital debt at the end of fiscal year 2015. The [American Society of Civil Engineers](#) recently gave public school buildings an overall grade of D+ in its 2017 Infrastructure report card, and report that about 1 in 4 of the country's school buildings are in fair or poor condition.

3. Public school facilities funding is inequitable. 80% of funding for school construction, modernization, and major facilities projects comes from local taxes, which leads to huge disparities between districts that can raise tax revenues for bonds and those that cannot. Some states provide a significant amount of support for school facilities, but 12 states—including states with some of the largest school systems in the country—provide none at all. The inequities disproportionately impact high-need urban and rural school systems. For example, more than 6 million rural students lack high-speed broadband. And in Baltimore City, public schools were closed for a week during an extended cold spell this past winter because so many schools have boilers in need of major repairs.

Our facilities funding system is inequitable.



Source: [2016 State of Our Schools: America's K-12 Facilities](#)

4. Public school facilities need to be resilient. Public school facilities, as the places where nearly 50 million children assemble, need to be resilient in the face of natural disasters. They serve as recovery centers for communities following community wide displacement. On average public school facilities are 47 years old and those 15 years and older no longer meet current building codes designed to withstand severe weather conditions. The only real federal dollars that do go to local school districts are FEMA disaster assistance funding to help rebuild schools *after* natural disasters. These FEMA dollars can be substantial, but fall far short of the needs.

5. The educational impact of substandard facilities is substantial. The importance of facilities to student and staff health and performance is well established. Poor ventilation, lead in the water, the lack of daylight and/or good lighting all play a part in the health and well-being of students. These facilities are a key prerequisite to improving academic performance. While many students are fortunate to attend modern school facilities, too many others, mostly minority and poor students, suffer from attending schools that have poor ventilation and indoor air quality.

Little wonder then that asthma is the leading chronic illness among children and it remains the chief reason why children miss school during the school year. Approximately 6.8 million children have asthma. In a literature review examining ventilation rates and respiratory illness, for example, researchers at Lawrence Berkeley Labs noted an increase of 50-370 percent increase in respiratory illnesses in spaces with poor ventilation, common in schools, compared to spaces meeting industry-accepted standards.

6. Schools are community hubs for social services. Lousy school buildings don't just affect students and teachers, they impact the many social service programs that use schools as their hubs. During the school year, for example, 14.5 million school breakfasts and 30.4 million lunches are served every week, more than 2 million children get health care at 2,149 School Based Health Clinics, and close to 7.5 million children attend safe after-school activities. In addition, over 3 million Americans attend adult literacy and English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes in public school facilities. A growing number of public schools are designed as joint-use facilities and built alongside YMCA's and public libraries. Public schools also often act as the recreational center for the neighborhood. Indeed, the local public school

is often the one public institution that continues to function in poor and working class communities.

7. Teachers need better working conditions. During recent teacher walkouts in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and North Carolina, [teachers raised concerns](#) about pay and the conditions in their school buildings. In [North Carolina](#), for example, 20,000 school teachers and their supporters marched on the State Capitol urging state leaders to add a \$1.9 billion school bond issue to the November ballot.

8. The public supports a federal investment in public school facilities. In a February 2018 poll conducted by Politico and the Harvard School of Public Health, 72 percent of Americans, including 68 percent of Republicans, support spending federal infrastructure dollars on public school facilities.

Priorities for Increased Federal Infrastructure Spending by Party Identity

% Saying Extremely or Very Important Priority				
	% Total	% Republican	% Democrat	% Independent
Improving bridges	72	73	75	69
Improving school buildings	72	68	76	75
Improving roads	71	77	70	70
Improving the power grid	58	61	59	55
Improving airports	44	41	46	44
Deepening and clearing harbors and rebuilding ports	37	42	33	38
Improving and expanding access to high-speed broadband internet	32	21	39	36

Source: [POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Americans' Views of President Trump's Agenda on Health Care, Immigration, and Infrastructure](#), February 21 – 25, 2018. Base: U.S. adults.

9. Reporters are digging deeper. A recent major series in the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reports on cases where children and staff suffer serious facility-related health and safety threats from decades of deferred maintenance in the city's schools, which average over 65 years. Other articles from [The Roanoke Times](#), a recent roundup by the [AP](#), and ongoing coverage by the [Baltimore Sun](#) similarly illustrate the growing need for increased federal funding to protect students and teachers. In April 2018 the [New York Times](#) received hundreds of comments and pictures from frustrated teachers about their poor working conditions in crumbling schools.

10. Congress is starting to listen. 116 House members support a [bill](#) introduced by Rep. Bobby Scott (VA), and 15 Senators have signed on to a similar [bill](#) introduced by Sen. Jack Reed (RI). Both bills would provide \$100 billion in federal grants and school construction bonds over the next 10 years, and would create an estimated 1.8 million construction jobs nationwide. House and Senate Democrat leaders have [pledged](#) to make at least a \$50 billion investment in public school facilities should they take back control of the Congress after the midterm elections.

Recently, a group of 15 Republican House members, led by Congressman David Joyce of Ohio, urged the Administration to include school facilities in any infrastructure package it sends to Congress early next year.

About [Re]Building America's School Infrastructure Coalition (B.A.S.I.C.)

B.A.S.I.C. is gaining political traction through numerous Capitol Hill meetings. Since its inception in December 2017, B.A.S.I.C. has conducted more than 100 congressional visits to key legislators and staff to make the case for schools getting their share of federal infrastructure funds. We believe that the next Congress will make infrastructure legislation a top priority and that there will be significant bipartisan support to pass the legislation if a dedicated revenue stream can be found.

To learn more: Visit B.A.S.I.C.'s [website](#), which includes state-by-state maps showing the:
1) Current investment gaps, state by state;

- 2) Breakdown of how much of the \$100 billion each state would get in funding;
- 3) Number of jobs a \$100 billion investment in school facilities would generate.

Other sources of information are our [2016 State of Our Schools Report](#), with extensive state data, and our [infographic](#) that offers a one-page summary.

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