

# Institute for Objective Policy Assessment (IOPA)



## Statement of Capacity

The Institute for Objective Policy Assessment has the expertise to orchestrate the research and outreach for large projects, as described below.

### I. **Legal Description and Contact Info**

A. Legal Name: *Institute for Objective Policy Assessment*

B. 501[c]3, Tax Exempt Think Tank

C. Employer ID: 61-1951967

D. Legal Address (incorporated in NC).

321 Old Asheland Ave., Asheville, NC 28801-4002

E. Key Contact Person: Dr. John Merrifield, President - 435-485-8157

IOPACHief@policytalk.org

F. Website: <https://policytalk.org/>

### II. **Mission Statement**

IOPA aims to package diverse perspectives into objective, insightful policy assessments. IOPA will do that by revealing analysts' potential for bias, supplementing that with external review-comment-reply, and by presenting research findings from diverse perspectives, including through online conversation forums. The latter will also provide the opportunity for continuous Q&A. IOPA hopes that process defines areas of potential consensus and the basis for informed disagreement. All aspects of Accountability, including 'Policy Analyst Accountability,' will be another major IOPA objective.

Through a carefully orchestrated and packaged process of informed, civil disagreement, IOPA aims to be a one-stop shop for fully informed policymaking.

The importance of that process, major coverage gaps and missteps by the existing major think tanks motivated the very recent formation (2020) of IOPA. The most important capacity is the discernment of the most important questions, and viable research strategies to address them.

## About the IOPA Strategy:

Trustworthy sources of policy assessment insights are always important. While there are enough important policies to create ‘room’ for several organizations committed to objectivity and diversity of perspective, no existing organizations come close to bending over backwards to assure it. IOPA will. A research organization totally committed to objectivity and diversity of perspective is especially important now, in *these times of unprecedented polarization, and time management challenges*. Policymakers typically cannot take the time to survey several respectable research organizations to see an issue whole. It can be very important to have a single respected source of different perspectives. For the policies IOPA assesses, IOPA aims to be that single respected source of the important perspectives; being insightful and inciteful.

Because there are no unbiased individuals, IOPA’s commitment to objectivity and diversity of perspective will begin with an up-to-date public posting of IOPA Principal Investigators’ grounds for bias (particular perspectives), including memberships and publications that could signal such bias, or any basis for a particular perspective. Before IOPA studies are published, they will be subjected to external, blind review, whenever possible, by someone(s) known to hold a different perspective than the IOPA author. That review *may* yield revisions and an IOPA author reply that contests reviewer comments. Those items (policy assessment-comment-reply) are posted together to an online public conversation forum. The IOPA website will contain a more detailed description of the IOPA policy for assuring maximum objectivity and diversity of perspective.

Since no organization can adequately address all of the important policy issues, IOPA hopes to ‘infect’ other research organizations; that is, persuade them to adopt IOPA’s objectivity and diversity of perspective policies, or better yet, improve upon the IOPA policy. And IOPA will provide a ‘Good-Housekeeping-Seal’ equivalent certification of the practices of others that credibly claim to discourage bias, warn of potential bias, and provide diverse perspectives. IOPA will evaluate requests for the certification, or declare worthiness/unworthiness of the certification on its own. IOPA is committed to assessment of important, controversial policies, anti-bias, pro-diversity-of-perspective, outreach, and accountability.

### Examples of Major Issue Gaps and Missteps by Existing Think Tanks:

Ignoring Price Formation and Adjustment Role in the Reform of K-12 School Systems

Seventeen Missing and Distorted Key Aspects of the Climate Change Debate

Ask to What Extent do Income Quintile differences signal policy relevant Income Inequality?

Importance of Ballot Length / Voter Fatigue / Over-Extended Electorate?

What Role can Federal Mineral Rights sales play in Addressing Unsustainable Debt?

Inattention to Increased Accountability, especially Accountability of Intellectuals

Frequent failure to allow and optimize Disaster Response through the Price System

Inattention to [rare, but significant] Counter-Productive Choice and Competition

Failure to Empower and Incentivize Loyal Opposition

### III. **History and Achievements**

Even though COVID and normal reticence about the donation-worthiness of new entities has kept IOPA income and budget low:

#### **A. Specific IOPA Funded Projects**

1. **\$101,000** – Friedman Project - fiscal rules and fiscal sustainability  
vetfiscalrules.net, which is becoming  
<https://objectivepolicyassessment.org/vetfiscalrules>  
*Can the Debt Growth be Stopped?*  
*Restoring America's Fiscal Constitution*  
*A Fiscal Cliff*  
*Using Rules-Based Fiscal and Monetary Policy to Solve the Debt Crisis*  
*New Perspectives on State Government Fiscal Challenges*
2. **\$8000** – Assess the Basis for the Colorado Skills Gap  
  
Based on IOPA's expertise in K-12 education, and urban-regional economics.
3. **\$15,000** -  
Economic Development Education Savings Accounts for Louisiana  
That just-completed study is part of IOPA's work with a school system reform group that includes legislators and candidates for governor and lt. governor.

#### **B. Basis for IOPA Collaboration with Spain's EFSE**

*Unproductive School Choice Debates* (2023)

Authors: IOPA President John Merrifield and Nathan Gray

*School System Reform: How and Why is a Price-less Tale* (2019/2022)

just updated. Author: IOPA President John Merrifield

*The School Choice Wars* (2001) – critically acclaimed.

Author: IOPA President John Merrifield

[www.schoolsystemreformstudies.net](http://www.schoolsystemreformstudies.net), that became

<https://policytalk.org> – click on K-12 on the Tier 1 Menu

#### **C. Additional IOPA Expertise: An [Assessment of the Climate Change Debates](#)**

#### IV. **Organization and Structure**

Dr. John Merrifield, President  
Dr. Richard Phelps, Vice-President  
Dr. Nathan Gray, Treasurer

And Nine Board members

#### V. **Organization Finances**

<u>Fiscal Year (Sept 1- August 31)</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
2021	\$101,000	\$101,000
2022	\$23,000	\$7500

#### VI. **Staff Members - No Permanent Staff - Only Independent Contractors**