



# Institute for Objective Policy Assessment (IOPA)

## A ‘NEED’ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *26+ Important Niches that IOPA Can Fill*

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**BIG PICTURE**: 2020-23 showed us that we need many changes in direction, more than ever. We have some great think tanks. But we need more and better insights, or we’ll deepen our existing, dangerous jeopardy. Including new ways of providing critical insights, there are 26 very important issues and factors (*literally, A-Z*) given little or no proper attention by the existing think tanks.

A) **The IOPA Strategy**: Package diverse, well-researched perspectives into objective *assessments*; analysis plus informed, civil disagreement, and online discussion at policytalk.org.

Why should you support IOPA when there are established, high-class think tanks; EdChoice, Cato, Heritage, Brookings, PPI, AEI, CEI, JMI, . . .? A: Because it can take new scholars to explore new ideas in new ways. Groupthink and ‘Not Invented Here’ are common, serious impediments to new ideas. *We find ourselves in dangerous circumstances despite those think tanks’ best efforts, and because of some of those efforts.*

Quoting from IOPA Board Member Lawrence Siegel’s [book](#), *Fewer, Richer, Greener* (p 342):

**\*\* “Informed outsiders’ perspectives should always be welcomed in any field, since insiders tend to reinforce each other’s views and prejudices.” \*\*\*\*\***

B) **K-12 School System Reform (SSR)**: My 2022 update of a 2019 book describes many serious knowledge gaps. We must identify more school system outcome determinants: Too much variance is still unexplained.

C) **Scandals attributed to chartered public schools**: insufficient understanding jeopardizes SSR;

D) **SSR relevance/need for price system signals and incentives**: the only alternative to price system determination of what’s taught, how, and to whom is the ongoing central planning failure. Assigned public schools have been especially bad for the least advantaged. And zero admission price schooling is a costly delusion that concentrates poverty near the worst schools.

E) **Income Inequality**: We need much greater recognition that income mobility determines whether significant income inequality is great, or worthy of some concern. Income quintile inequality is dangerously misleading. Also, the cost and benefits of forced redistribution need more attention.

F) **Abused, neglected children**: We need to [eliminate the shortages](#) of desperately needed services.

G) **Risk Comparison**: The pandemic reminded us that the political process needs to address the risk du jour alongside risks created by responses to the risk du jour.

H) **Audit of Climate Change Debate**: Because “getting climate change policy wrong will be very costly,” we must reconcile the highly credentialed, diverse positions. See this [extensive preliminary assessment](#). Especially, no-regrets paths to GHG reduction need to be given much more attention.

- I) Managed Trade: There may be more government intervention into international trade, which had better get us to do it much better, including much more out in the open.
- J) Voter Fatigue: Long ballots exacerbate low information voting, which yields low/no public accountability political control situations; as a prelude to reform, much awareness-raising needed.
- K) Central Planning Failure: need more attention to specific instances, and the general concept.
- L) Improving equity through price decontrol of K-12 schooling: assigned public schools have been especially bad for the least advantaged. And zero admission price schooling is a costly delusion.
- M) Political control of K-12 schooling: An in the weeds look at how such control actually proceeds.
- N) Health Care: To avoid the single-payer impact on availability and quality, we need to explore still-very-efficient, kinder-gentler-appearing strategies for maximizing coverage and access.
- O) Disaster Response: We need to develop a more efficient, still politically correct attitude toward price change in a disaster aftermath. So-called ‘price gouging’ is a serious virtuous language police issue.
- P) Accountability Perspectives: Well-aligned incentives and sunshine as the best ‘disinfectant;’ applied, everywhere, and for sure to educators, students, public intellectuals, think tanks, and policymakers as part of K-12 reform. IOPA’s dedication to accountability arose from Myron Lieberman’s prescient observation (p 292 of *Educational Morass* - 2007) that:  
*“As long as no negative consequences follow even egregiously mistaken credence goods [trusted information and analysis sources], better policies are improbable.”*  
 The need to discredit weak analysis has a flip side; the need to contest cancel culture.
- Q) Use of public school attendance zones concentrates and exacerbates urban poverty: the school choice expansion targeted-to-all-of-the-residents-of-poor-areas-remedy is [a school system reform Plan B](#).
- R) Comprehensive re-examination of a Universal Basic Income: many never examined aspects.
- S) Putting the ‘Loyal’ back into Loyal Opposition: discourage putting party over general welfare.
- T) Eviction bans: the ultimate disaster for renters; an example of a [transition gains trap](#) issue.
- U) Crony Capitalism Index: only with quantification can that poison be adequately attacked.
- V) When less choice is better: for example, congestion tolls should apply to all expressway lanes. Related to that, chart a course to well-crafted, politically feasible congestion fees and tolls.
- W) When competition can be harmful: for example, cities competing for sports teams or new firms.
- X) An IOPA Sounding Board Process: solicit and collaboratively develop new ideas.
- Y) A Virtuous Language Police: an in-process book-to-be and an IOPA commitment to polite, informed condemnation of misleading uses of key terms.
- Z) Persuasion tactics applied to opposition that didn’t arrive at the opinions through evidence/logic.
- Fiscal Sustainability: Sleepwalking into mega-crisis; need more attention to political feasibility of credible austerity and new revenue policies; federal and state. I didn’t include this in the A-Z list because alleging that this isn’t already getting a lot of attention would insult many diligent scholars, including [much work listed at IOPA’s Publications page](#). But there is room for much more attention to this:  
 a) existential threat; and b) huge opportunity to productively downsize government.

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