



LEVIN CENTER



FOR OVERSIGHT
AND DEMOCRACY



WAYNE STATE
Law School

Education Funding

Webinar for State Leaders and Staff

Intro to Legislative Oversight

Ben Eikey & Ian McKnight
January 2025



Agenda

- About the Levin Center
- State Oversight Academy
- What is Oversight?
- Recommendations

What is the Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy?



U.S. Sen. Carl Levin



Pennsylvania Oversight Committee



CSG West Annual Meeting



Maine Legislature
Government Oversight Committee

- Workshops for Congress, state, international legislatures
- Videos, testimony, webinars, social media
- Research & Reports (50-state analysis, contract oversight, more)
- Conferences, panels & events
- Oversight experts

State Oversight Academy: Resources

- Oversight workshops
- Oversight Leaders
- State Legislature Oversight Wiki
- Oversight Training Program - *launching February 5!*
- Symposium June 26th - 27th
- Monthly newsletter

stateoversight.org

What is legislative oversight?

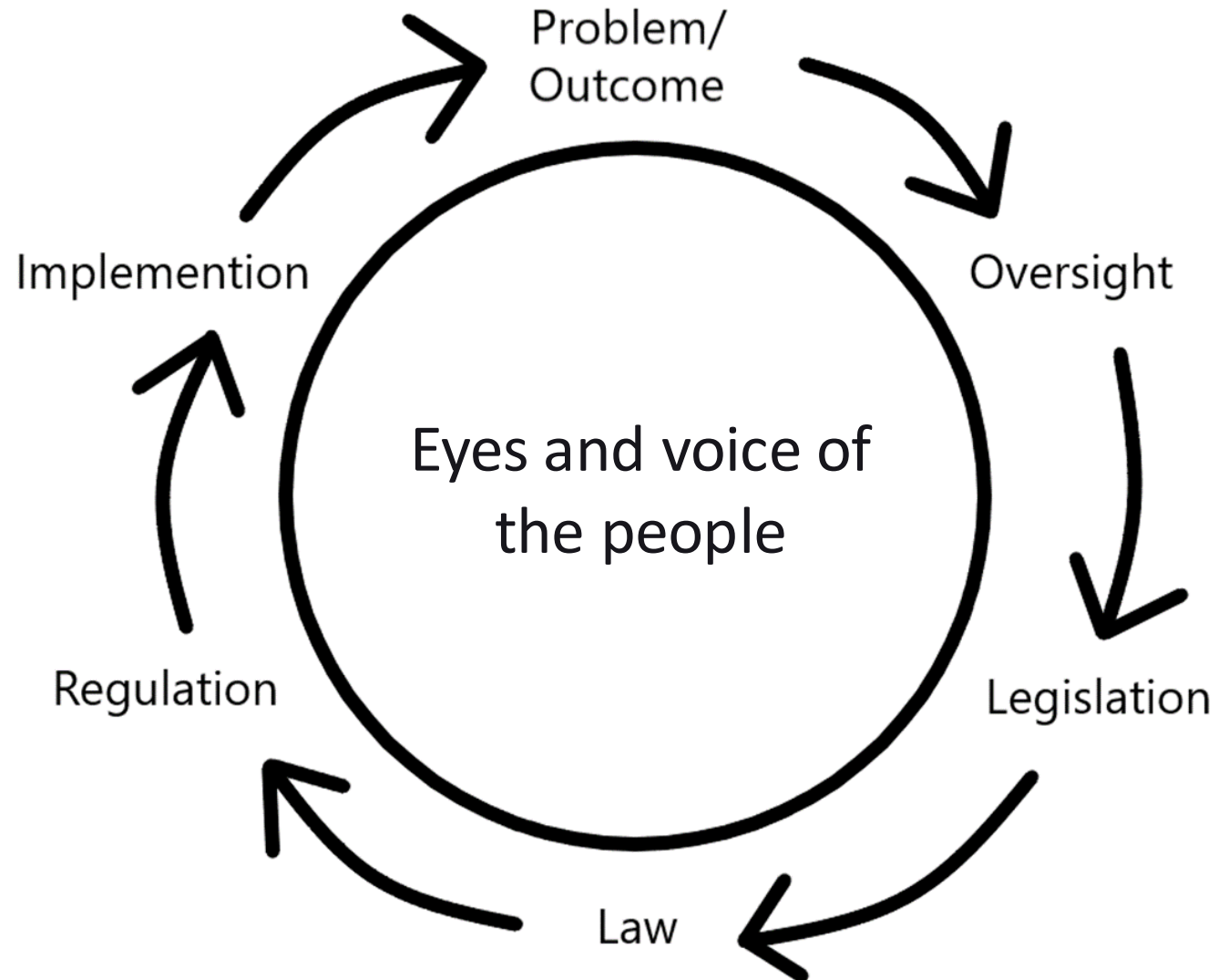
The “eyes and voice” of the people

“It is the proper duty of a representative body to look diligently into every affair of government and to talk much about what it sees. It is meant to be the eyes and the voice, and to embody the wisdom and will of its constituents.”

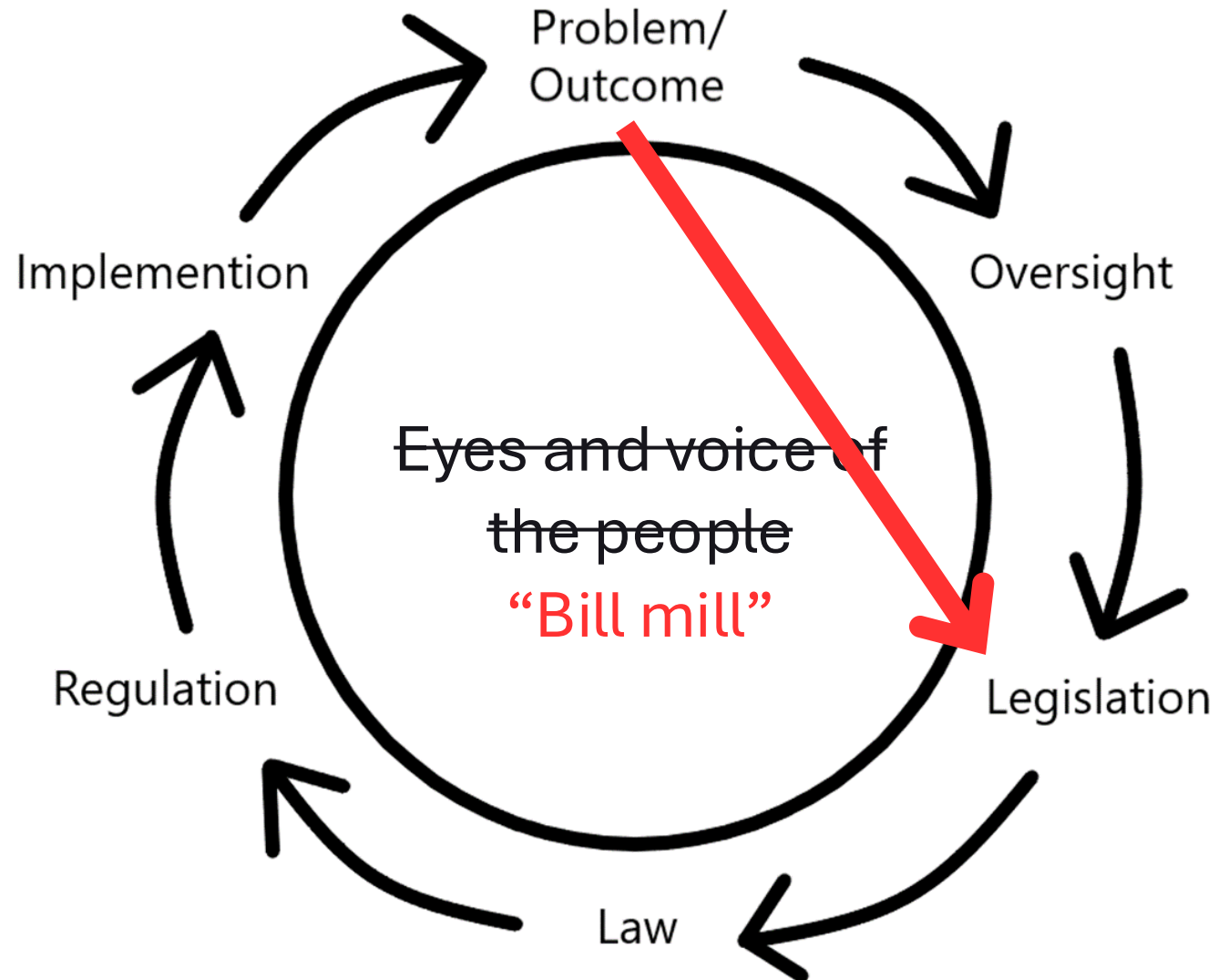
-- United States Supreme Court¹

¹ Trump v. Mazars USA, LLP, 140 S.Ct. 2019, 2031 (2020), citing United States v. Rumely, 345 U. S. 41, 43 (1953).

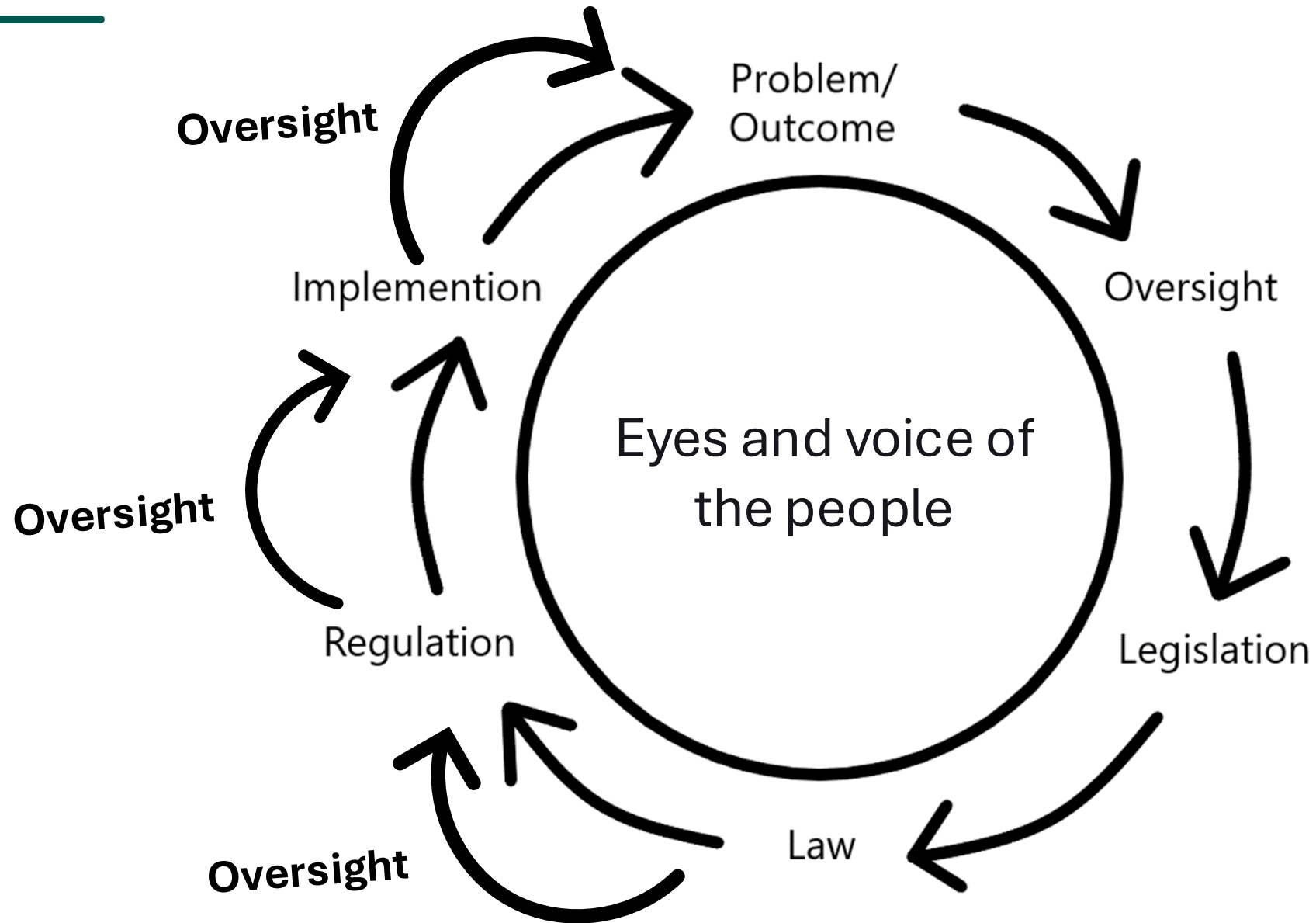
Cycle of Accountability



Cycle of Accountability

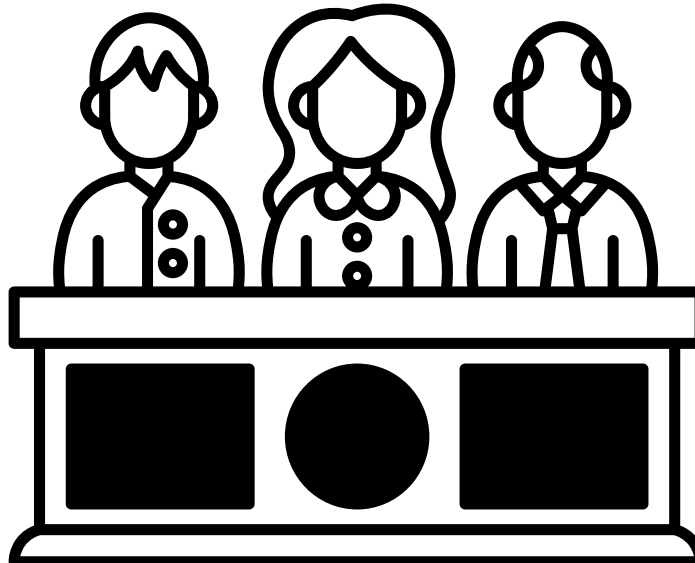


Cycle of Accountability



Avenues for State Legislative Oversight

- Analytic bureaucracies
- Appropriations process
- Committees
- Administrative rule review
- Advice and consent
- Monitoring contracts



Origin of Investigation Topics

- Committee jurisdiction
- Reports
- Constituents
- News
- Personal experience
- Oversight plan, long-term vision



Routine vs. Event-Driven Oversight



Routine

Program outcomes

Budgetary

Contracts

Compliance

Deter malfeasance



Event-Driven

Scandal

Disaster

Chronic problems

Escalating problems

Long-term investigation

Your Superpowers

- Legislator phone calls and emails get returned
- Legislators can request investigations and reports
- Legislator questions trigger research, reconsideration, and change
- Oversight can have as much, or more, impact as legislation



Phases of an Investigation

1. Fact-finding
2. Written product
3. Hearing
4. Follow-up



Factual Questions

- Not a hypothesis
- Process-orientated
- “How” and “what” questions, not “yes” or “no”

Great!

What kinds of oil spills happen in the Great Lakes and how are they handled?

How do outcomes for students receiving special education services vary across the state?

Less great...

How come don't we have bigger fines for shipping companies responsible for oil spills?

Why are the schools so bad in rural areas?

Recommendations for Strengthening Oversight

- **Joint oversight committee** with balanced party membership
- **Bipartisan approach** to topics, inquiry, witnesses, questions, etc.
- More **follow-up** (e.g., hearings) on reports published by analytic bureaucracies
- Include **contract oversight**
- Create **oversight plan** for your office
- **Be transparent** about oversight outcomes: post status and results of investigations



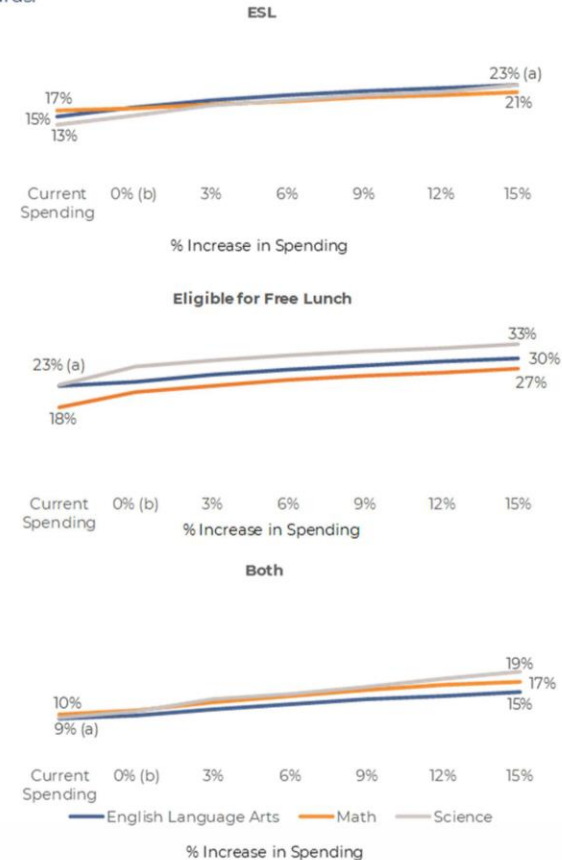
Examples: Estimating the Cost of K-12 Education



Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit

- Estimating the Cost of K-12 Education
- The Rundown podcast!

Figure 4. Targeted increases in spending were associated with significant improvements in the percentage of disadvantaged students who met state standards.



(a) The percentage of students meeting state standards is the same in English language arts and science.

(b) In this scenario, spending is reallocated but not increased.

Source: LPA model results.

Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit

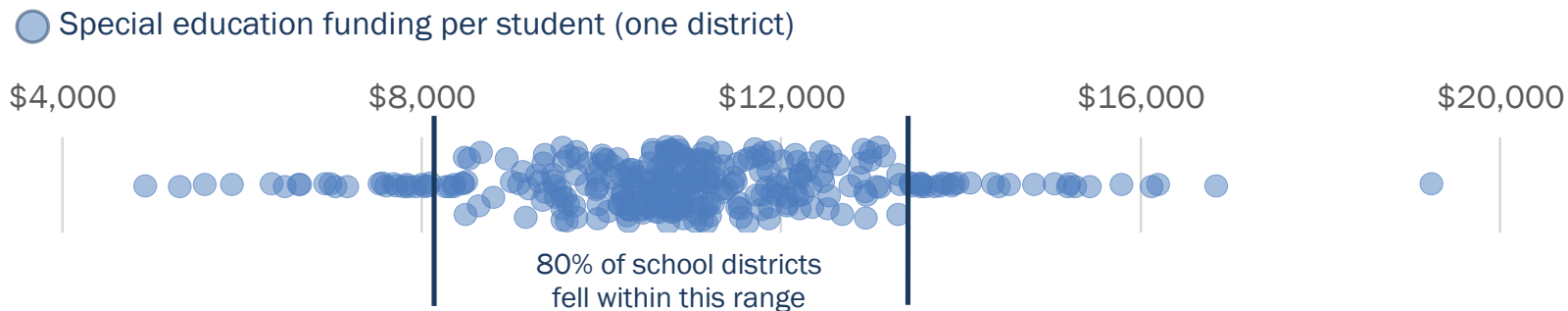
Examples: Estimating the Cost of K-12 Education



Washington State Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee

▪ Performance Audit of Special Education: Funding Formulas and Spending

Figure 2: Special education funding varied from \$4,921 to \$19,241 per student, per district



Note: Benge, Stehekin, and Shaw Island school districts had no special education students and received \$0. Values are unweighted district averages.

Source: Source: JLARC and American Institutes for Research (AIR) analysis of 2022-23 school district funding.

Advancing Oversight. Strengthening Democracy.

Thank you!

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stateoversight.org