



Institute for Objective Policy Assessment (IOPA; 501[c]3) - Start-up Proposal

Dr. John Merrifield, IOPA President

3/17/21

Mission Statement

IOPA aims to package diverse perspectives into objective, insightful policy assessments. IOPA will do that by revealing the potential for bias, supplementing that with external 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 consensus and the basis for informed disagreement.

About the IOPA Strategy - [www.objectivepolicyassessment.org]

No existing organizations come close to bending over backwards to assure multiple perspective, max objectivity products. IOPA will. A research organization totally committed to objectivity and diversity of perspective is especially important now, in *this time of unprecedented polarization, and time management challenges*. For the policies IOPA assesses, IOPA aims to be that single respectable source of the critical 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). Before IOPA studies are published, they will be subjected to external review, whenever possible, by someone(s) known to hold a different perspective than the IOPA author. Those (policy assessment-comment-reply) items will be posted together to an online public conversation forum. IOPA will aim to spread our policy assessment attitudes to other organizations.

Initial 'Signature Issues': K-12 School System Reform, Fiscal Rules / Sustainability, Health Care, Economic Development for Urban Pockets of Persistent Severe Poverty, and Climate Change

Other High Priority – High Value-Added Issues: Expressway Transportation, Crony Capitalism, Nordic Socialism, Entrepreneurship, Income Inequality/Mobility, Disaster Recovery, Water Supply, Good and Bad (Real/Imagined) Competition – Economic and Political, Good/Bad Choice, and 'Demosclerosis' (Voter Fatigue / Over-Extended Electorate).

Funding Needs: A prominent businessman and leader once noted that a new business typically must work for free and sell at cost. So, I want money for: a) research assistants – mostly graduate students studying issues and identifying potential reviewers; b) external author and reviewer stipends; and c) website construction. Credibility on the 'Climate Change' issue is especially sensitive to perceptions of bias arising from funding sources, making it helpful that environmental economist, John Merrifield (JM), work for free on the "Assessment of the Climate Change Debate." Below are use-of-funds examples (I–IV). > \$100,000 funds the 'Launch Priorities' [request file] and at least one of I - IV.

So, I (JM) cannot specify a start-up budget. Any non-trivial donation will yield some IOPA start-up. More webmaster and RA help means movement on more issues.



I. Envisioned Audit of the Climate Change Debate – IOPA Style (see the initial assessment at <https://objectivepolicyassessment.org/climate-change-debate/>): A) What: Assess the debate contents – facilitate more informed public and debate upgrade. B) Why? “Getting this wrong will be very costly (former Guv);” big risk - well-credentialed views vary widely. JM has key advantages in policy-making here, especially now. The initial assessment describes those advantages. C) An IOPA author must post a statement of their beliefs on an issue and provide access to climate-change-related publications and public pronouncements. That pressures IOPA authors to be as objective as possible. D) IOPA will find reviewers that do not share the author’s (my) perspective. At least one reviewer is paid to comment. E) I can respond with revisions, and/or contest the reviewer’s assertions. F) The potential bias statement, the revised Assessment, reviewer comments, and reply become part of a conversation forum at the IOPA website so that a conversation can commence, and interested parties, such as policymakers, can eavesdrop.

II. K-12 School System Reform Related Project – IOPA Style: A) What: Assess the basis of the alleged scandals associated with chartered public schools. B) Why: Scandal is an existential threat to any political movement. Economic theory predicts scandalous behavior as a result of restraints on choice embedded in chartering, especially price-lessness. If an assessment confirms that prediction, the assessment inoculates non-price-less school choice proposals from the political effects of scandal legitimately (sadly) arising from chartering. C) – F) are the same as above.

Transformational School System Reform being my (JM) top area of expertise, an extensive proposal for IOPA’s school system reform-related projects is available upon request.

III. Economic Development for Urban Pockets of Severe Poverty-Related Project – IOPA Style: A) What: Examine a promising approach to urban poverty. B) Why: Traditional approaches to poverty in particular towns or parts of cities have always been costly, and mostly failures. But the rare instances of universal private school choice availability in specific areas have shown that it can be cheaply deployed to attract residents and businesses to low income areas, and stem or reverse middle/upper-income flight to poor areas. C) – F) are the same as above.

IV. Accountability Project – IOPA Style: A) What: ‘Accountability’ has double meaning for gov’t-dominated production of services that are not public goods; for example, schooling, which can be a merit-good, not a public good. 1) Producers must be held accountable, and; 2) Intellectual supporters and critics of gov’t production must be held accountable. B) Why: Especially, regarding #2, IOPA attention was driven by the dire U.S. K-12 school system circumstances (6 authoritative ‘Nation at Risk’ declarations*¹), AND by Myron Lieberman’s prescient observation that (p 292 of *Educational Morass* - 2007):

“As long as no negative consequences follow even egregiously mistaken credence goods [trusted information and analysis sources], better educational policies are improbable.”

The proposed IOPA project will develop an improved accountability structure for K-12 educators, and establish a process for holding K-12 school system reform scholars, public intellectuals, think tanks, and journalists accountable for their ‘contributions’ to the school system reform debate.

Again, C) – F) are the same as above. From IOPA’s perspective, the Lieberman statement applies equally well to, for example (among many), Climate Change, Health Care, and Water Supply.

* <https://www.schoolsystemreformstudies.net/nation-at-risk-vi/>. Because the world’s best school systems are only about ten percent better than the U.S. systems average, it’s a dire global situation.