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Editor:

What happened to the lottery dollars?

It's a question that comes up often, including in a recent letter to the editor in *The Gainesville Sun*. People see and hear ads boasting that the Florida Lottery has contributed billions to public education and naturally wonder why schools are still short on money.

State leaders sold the lottery to voters with a promise that it would 'enhance' funding for schools. They didn't keep that promise. Instead, they just substituted lottery dollars for other sources of school funding.

In 2016-17, about 73% of lottery revenues (\$4.2 billion) was spent on running the lottery—prizes, vendor fees, and administrative costs, like all those billboards and ads. The rest, about \$1.7 billion, went to Bright Futures Scholarships, colleges and universities and K-12 education. All told, Florida's 4000 or so traditional public and charter schools received about \$327 million in lottery dollars that year, less than 6% of what the lottery brought in.

And even that money comes with strings attached. For example, school districts are required to spend some of it to fund smaller class sizes, which Florida voters approved with the expectation that the state would pay the costs. Some goes to pay off bonds the state issued years ago to fund school construction projects. And some goes to schools that earn an A grade or have raised their school grade. School advisory councils decide how that money is spent, typically on teacher and staff bonuses.

If there's any money left, districts may receive 'discretionary' lottery dollars—or not. There have been several years in which districts have received no discretionary lottery dollars. This year we'll get about \$51,000—not enough to pay for one teacher.

Voters had good intentions when they approved the lottery during the 1986 election, but the results were not what they were promised. We want to make sure Alachua County voters have all the facts when they go into the voting booth this year to vote on the Half-Cent for Schools to revitalize our old and outdated classrooms and school buildings.

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