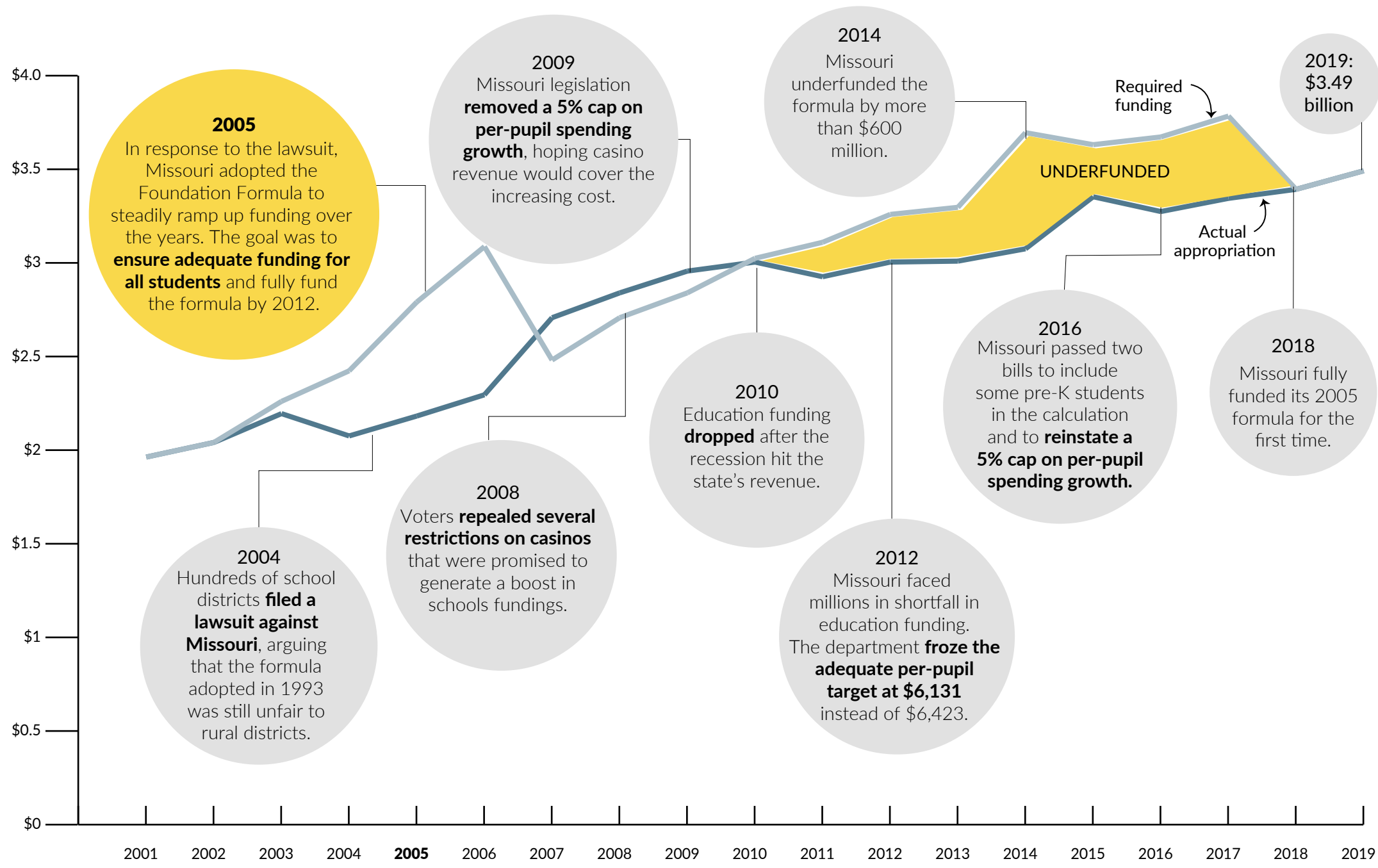
Underfunded promise

Missouri Foundation Formula was adopted in 2005 to ensure adequate funding for students. But many school districts have yet to see the future promised more than a decade ago.

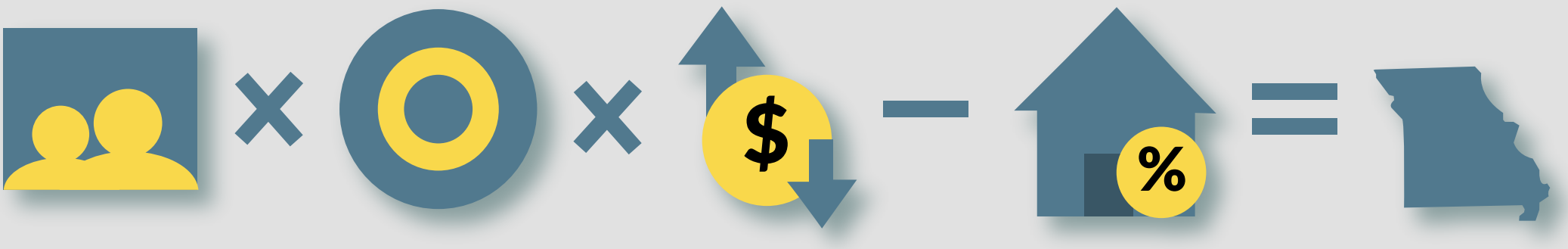
TRAN NGUYEN/Missourian

Since 1945, Missouri statutes have required at least 25% of the state's revenue to go to schools. However, this funding hasn't always gone to those who needed it most. After state court deemed Missouri's funding system unconstitutional in 1993, Missouri passed the Outstanding Schools Act to implement sweeping funding reforms. In 2004, Missouri was hit with another lawsuit alleging inadequate funding. Missouri Foundation Formula was adopted to further move toward adequacy-based funding with a plan to fully fund the formula by 2012. Still, problems persist as the state continues to introduce and allow exceptions that prevent the formula from being fully funded. **Here's how the formula fell short on the promise of an equitable education in Missouri**:



Understanding the Missouri Foundation Formula:

The 2005 Foundation Formula is the state's latest attempt to establish a funding mechanism that would address both inequity and inadequacy in school funding. The formula uses the following factors to determine each district's level of funding:



Weighted Average Daily Attendance: The average number of students in a district. As some students are more expensive to educate (students on free- and reduced-lunch, students in special education and students with limited English proficiency), **a district may be entitled to more funding if it has a high concentration of these students.**

State Adequacy Target: A specific dollar amount set by the state every two years. **A key component in the formula**, it's designed to ensure students' basic learning needs and funding equitability among districts are met. This number shouldn't exceed a 5% cap on growth as of 2016, though the target has steadily declined (with an exception in 2019) since 2014.

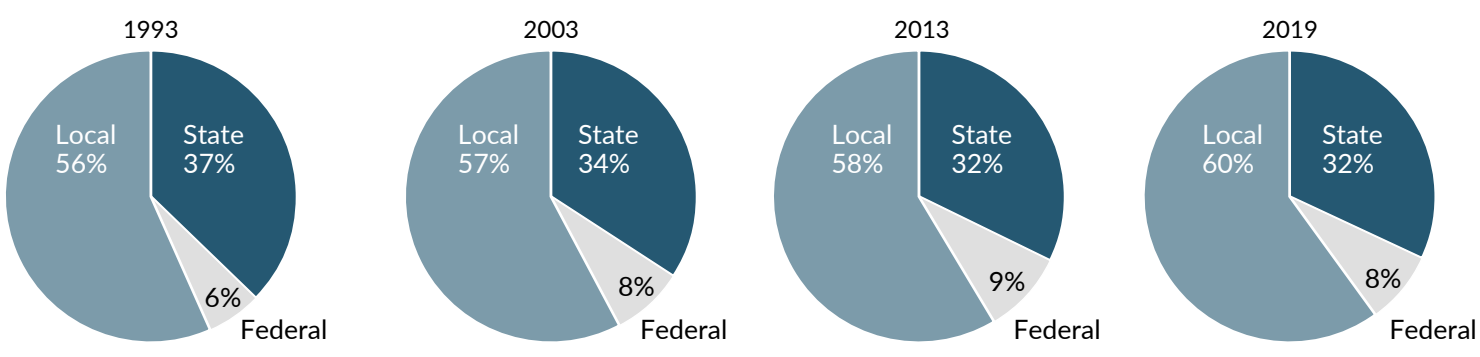
Dollar Value Modifier: This is used to adjust for areas with a higher cost of living.

Local Efforts: This consists of property tax, with values set at a 2004 level, and funding from Proposition C, which is an additional one cent on dollar sales and use taxes.

Required State Funding: While the foundation funding makes up a big chunk of the state appropriation, Missouri also provides funding to districts through different avenues such as transportation.

School funding sources over time

The state portion of funding has decreased over the years, while the local funding mechanism has made up a larger proportion of funding.



Sources: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Budget Project, Missouri Office of Administration