

Subject: Voter input regarding for school funding committee meetings June 16-17, 2016

Dear Senator King and Representative Barker:

I plan to attend one of the the upcoming school funding committee meetings in Topeka but since the newspaper article (Lawrence Journal World) did not specify how the public feedback session sign-up would take place for the upcoming Thursday and Friday meetings, I am sending my email comments for your consideration.

I am currently registered as a Republican voter in Douglas County, but feel strongly drawn to think of myself as an independent voter since I don't feel the current Republican elected officials adequately reflect my beliefs on a variety of issues, including educational funding.

I think Governor Brownback's failed economic recovery plan and the legislature's unwillingness to exercise leadership to override the governor's reckless financial policies have threatened the long-term stability and quality of Kansas education as nothing I've witnessed in my 47 years in Kansas. Were it not for the checks-and-balance of the state constitution as currently exercised by our courts I fear the state of public education in Kansas would be at risk of suffering irreparable harm due to the austerity being repeatedly forced on school districts, their staff, and ultimately, our youngsters. It's wonderful to see how our constitutional democracy is working in the current environment to hold our legislative and executive branches accountable. The rhetoric from the Governor and certain legislators regarding reigning in the courts strikes me as wrong-headed and potentially violating the constitutional principles I believe have helped keep our country and state strong. Instead, I'd like to see leadership address approaches to increase revenue back to the state including taxes. I am not afraid to pay for the things that preserve and secure the longterm viability of our state and its citizens, and education is one of those "things".

I've lived in Kansas since moving here in 1969 as a freshman in college. I obtained my BA from the University of Kansas(1977) and my MS from Wichita State University (1986), also attending Emporia State University, Sterling College, and Washburn University for classes. I am a married father of five children, all of whom benefitted from 12 years of Kansas public school educations (Halstead, Tonganoxie, and Lawrence schools). My wife, a Kansas native from a family farm near Lone Elm,KS, is a graduate of Washburn University and also attended Allen County Community College and Kansas State. I spent 10 years (1978-1987)as a high school science teacher and coach in small Kansas school districts (i.e. Waverly-Lebo USD and Halstead USD), as well as serving as a community college adjunct anatomy&physiology instructor (1987-1990's)for Hutchinson Community College, Kansas City,KS Community College, Johnson County Community College, and currently (2011-present) Highland County Community College at their Perry, KS branch near my home in the Perry-Lecompton school district. Due to my interest in educational opportunities for our Kansas children , I also served as a school board member and school board president in the Tonganoxie school district (1991-94). My family and I have invested a significant portion of our time ,talent, and income in Kansas education at all levels and overall I am quite pleased with the quality offered. Dollar for dollar I believe what Kansas schools offer our students and their families is one of the key benefits for those families who choose to stay in our state.

I think it important to add that due to the wages I experienced as a high school science teacher and coach trying to support a family of 6 others, I chose to leave public education in 1988. I began what became a 23-year career working for major pharmaceutical companies. My work over the years often involved traveling out-of-state on business. During one period, rather than accept a company-paid offer to move my family to Chicago, I opted to fly to my Chicago office weekly for four years in order that my wife and children could enjoy the benefits of life in Kansas. I don't regret the decision to maintain my family and home in Kansas, even though the travel and absence from home were ongoing burdens. My management and training and development leadership work for major pharmaceutical corporations also provided me with an appreciation for the necessity of providing adequate funding for essential goods and services to maintain the longterm viability of a company. As one future CEO stated, the difference between a manager and leader can be seen when firetrucks show up at a major fire scene. The fireman who manages the blaze knows all the necessary skills to attack a burning building. But, the fireman who leads the operation must be able to direct the firemen to the right buildings. In a similar way, I think adequate,even strong sustainable educational funding is the "right building" for legislators, the executive branch, and the judiciary to focus on in the immediate term. Ask Kansas citizens to pay for their schools and levy the taxes necessary to do so. The issue of the quality of education achieved by Kansas schools will and should continue to be a part of the longer range planning efforts and discussions. For now, let's make certain our Kansas citizens are given the opportunity to adequately fund one of the state's gems, its schools.

Best regards,

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