



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Topeka- Supporters of public education are set to gather on the south lawn of the Kansas statehouse Saturday morning, May 17, for a rally asking attendees to “Raise Your Hand to Reclaim the Promise.” The rally is actually the second part of a three-part event and gathering. The first part honors the struggles of African American students, parents and teachers as they fought for equity and fairness leading up to the Brown vs. Board of Education landmark decision 60 years ago. At 10:30 a.m., attendees will gather at the Brown v Board historical site and Monroe School. After a brief address to those gathered, the group will march to the statehouse and join additional supporters for the 11:30 a.m. rally. The third part of the event is focused on fellowship as participants will be invited to enjoy a free picnic.

The march, rally, and picnic are the results of a coordinated effort by the American Federation of Teachers, Kansas and the Kansas National Education Association. Support from other labor groups, pro-public education groups, and local elected officials is also noteworthy. Planning began several weeks ago and groups have organized buses to bring pro-public education supporters to Topeka from all corners of Kansas. Promotion of the event primarily focused on social media and word of mouth. Attendees riding the free buses were not limited to any group and many citizens from outside of education and labor have registered online to attend.

At the rally a series of guest speakers will address those in attendance. Following is a list of confirmed speakers:

- **Randi Weingarten**, President, American Federation of Teachers
- **Reverend Rueben D. Eckels**, New Day Christian Church, Wichita, Kansas
- **Lindsay Baltzell**, 5th Grade Student, Tecumseh South Elementary School, Shawnee Heights School District

- **Representative Paul Davis**, House Minority Leader, Candidate for Governor of Kansas
- **Heather Ousley**, Game On for Kansas Public Schools, 60-Mile Walk for Public Schools Advocate, Parent in Shawnee Mission School District
- **Karen Godfrey**, President, Kansas National Education Association

While the gathering at Monroe school is intended to honor the Brown v Board decision, the rally will focus on current equity, adequacy and fairness issues in Kansas public schools. Recent events in the Kansas legislature have put into sharp focus the need to continue to inform the citizens of Kansas that public schools are under attack by special interest groups whose influence in the statehouse is pervasive. Governor Brownback's solution to the equity mandate handed down by the Kansas Supreme Court benefits few districts, and actually hurts many more. Touted as part of his "roadmap for Kansas", Governor Brownback urged the Kansas Legislature to "listen to those closest to students, their teachers" during his most recent state of the state address. **However as KNEA President Karen Godfrey remarked, "Supporters of Kansas public schools including parents and teachers are woefully disappointed that the Governor signed a bill with harmful policy that had no hearing or public discourse whatsoever. Kansans overwhelmingly supported a clean funding bill for public schools not dark of night attacks on Kansas teachers."**

AFT President, Randi Weingarten spoke to the connection of past and present. "The decision 60 years ago was a moral and legal imperative to desegregate our public schools. But today, we have segregated schools based on poverty. The legacy of Brown vs. Board of Education is to create opportunities in our public schools so that all kids, of all races and income levels, can succeed."

Note: Press and media hospitality tent will be on the grounds of the statehouse. Press packets, bottled water and snacks will be available. Speakers from the rally will be available at the press tent after the rally as personal schedules permit.

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