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

Brownback Signs HB 2506 Into Law

Topeka- With the Governor's signing of HB 2506 into law, districts, teachers, and students lose while Brownback's special interest agenda advances. KNEA was hopeful that Governor Brownback would listen to the voices of education professionals and public school advocates from throughout the state. Once again, the governor turned a deaf ear to those closest to students and chose instead to support what KNEA president, Karen Godfrey has described as "poisonous policy". Yesterday, the Governor and those legislators who exercised a complete lack of public transparency in ramming harmful policy into a school finance bill, face the following realities:

- Although the Governor will continue to tout this legislation as an increase in funding, several factors included in the financing formula mean that it will actually be a loss for most districts and a gain for only about a dozen districts.
- Stripping teachers of due process rights harms public school teachers professionally, but harms students more. Due process worked, was valued by strong administrators, and ensured that students had a strong advocate in the classroom. This law diminishes teachers' ability to advocate for their students.
- At-risk students, who need critical services to be successful, will see reductions in services under this law.
- Classrooms are now open to those without background and training in methods and strategies critical for achievement to act as teachers.
- There is a \$10 million corporate tax giveaway - money that could have been used to maintain at-risk funding instead of cutting it.

The hypocrisy in the creation and signing of this attack on the public schools of Kansas and public school teachers is unprecedented. Governor Brownback's Senate allies passed a government transparency bill on a vote of 40 to 0 just days before they used floor amendments under cover of darkness to attach anti-public schools and anti-teacher policy provisions to a finance bill. None of these amendments had a hearing in both chambers and none of them have ever passed even one chamber of the legislature.

The Governor and his allies tout "local control" as their mantra in denying veteran teachers the due process protections the Supreme Court deemed sound public policy as far back as 1957. Yet this same Governor and his allies have embraced legislation stripping local units of Government – cities, counties, school districts, and colleges – of local decision making when it comes to speaking to the legislature, controlling the carrying of weapons in their buildings, or entering into payroll deduction agreements with their employees.

The Governor must now completely own this law as an extension of his self-described "experimental" policy that has resulted in the largest cuts to public education in Kansas history. With fewer resources and less support, a clear effort to silence the profession, and a complete lack of respect for the dedicated professionals who serve Kansas students everyday, we believe the governor has chosen to promote policy that serves special interests and harms the general public. Combined with economic indicators that lag behind neighboring states, Governor Brownback's legacy as a regressive and special interest governor is clear.

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