



Making public schools great for every child.

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

KNEA calls for moving forward together to restore full funding for Kansas public schools.

Topeka- We are disappointed that today's announcement by the Kansas State Supreme Court prolongs a resolution of the school finance issue. It didn't deal directly with the current critical need in Kansas public schools. Together, the citizens of Kansas made sacrifices at a time when the state and national economy were in crisis. During that time Kansans came together and dealt with staggering cuts to education, believing the promise of full restoration to public school funding once the state economy had rebounded.

In 2011, Governor Brownback touted a state in full recovery and praised the Kansas Legislature for making our state strong. He also spoke of the need to end "sacrificing the future of our children" and the need to get school funding dollars out of the courts and into the classroom. The sacrifices and funding cuts were supposed to be temporary, but the first opportunity to live up to the promise to restore funding came and went. Instead, a tax policy was enacted that cut taxes for the wealthy and shifted the responsibility to the middle class and poorest Kansans. At the same time, we saw the largest cut to public education in state history.

While it didn't rule on adequacy, the court reaffirmed the inequity in our school funding. We know Kansas schools are suffering from inadequate resources, and some have fewer resources than others to serve our children, thus the equity ruling. Some are threatened with closure, and some are filled with overcrowded classrooms while teachers and support professionals have been laid off. Some schools no longer offer free tutoring after school and summer school, necessary supports for our struggling students. Some schools have reduced elective courses like art and music in an effort to save money. Parents are asked to pay more out of pocket to enroll their children, and the resources needed for the highest quality education possible have been stripped from school budgets.

There's no need to wait for additional rulings--these losses need to be rectified. Education is an investment in the future—in the economy and quality of life for Kansas citizens. Education gives all children a chance for a bright future. And businesses value a highly skilled, highly educated workforce above all other factors when looking for a location.

What we need to do now is move forward together and make the necessary funding available in a responsible manner. We don't need threats to cut funding to vital social services, rob retirement pensions, and cut aid to higher education. Public school students are still sacrificing, and the solution is obvious. Simply, find a responsible way to fund all public schools adequately as was promised.

The time for inaction has passed. Kansas students now rank 4th highest in the nation in cuts to their education. Is this the legacy that the Governor and the legislature want to leave our children? Is this the message Kansans want sent to businesses that would bring good jobs to Kansas if only we invested in a highly educated, highly skilled workforce?

We know the answer to these questions is a resounding no. So today, we call on Governor Brownback and the legislature to move forward in funding public education adequately and equitably. Stop actions that threaten to diminish quality public education and simply restore critical funding to our schools. Live up to promise that we all heard, and let's move forward together.

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