

Wild, Wild day under the dome!

The House Education Committee held a hearing today on HB 2621, the bill nullifying the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards, the Next Generation Science Standards, the Character Education Standards, and any standards related to the Common Core. In addition, it requires the state to return to an earlier state assessment program and establishes a curriculum standards writing task force of political appointees.

There were 71 conferees signed up to speak on the bill and the committee room was so packed that people were turned away and capitol police officers stood guard at the door. Fortunately for those kept outside it also happened to be Kansas State's Cats in the Capitol day and free Call Hall ice cream was available to all!

Chairperson Kasha Kelley ran a fair meeting, alternating proponents and opponents to the bill and limiting everyone to no more than 1 ½ minute.

Proponents of the bill complained about data collection and the ways data might be used. They lamented what they called a lack of parent involvement in the development of the standards and that decisions were made behind closed doors. And oddly enough some complained that the math standards were too easy while others said they were too hard.

Opponents of the bill including members of standards committees, superintendents, teachers, and school board members spoke passionately about how the standards are improving practice in our schools and urged the committee not to turn back the clock.

KNEA President Karen Godfrey testified as an opponent of the bill on behalf of KNEA.

There was no time available for committee discussion.

House Pensions considers defined contribution

A hearing was held today in House Pensions H.B. 2519, the Defined Contribution Bill which would switch Kansas public employees to 401(k)-style retirement plan.

KNEA sees this proposal to be catastrophic for Kansas. It would cost taxpayers billions in transition costs and imperil the retirement security of our teachers and other members of the KPERS Retirement System.

More than a dozen states have studied and rejected the switch to 401(k)-style proposals because they are costly, wasteful and unreliable. A windfall of evidence shows that defined contribution plans fail to provide for an adequate retirement. According to *The Pensionomics 2012 Report*, retiree expenditures from public pensions in Kansas supported \$1.7 billion in total economic output. For every taxpayer dollar contributed to Kansas pensions over the last 30 years, there has been \$4.67 in total output. With economic inequality growing, we need to expand retirement security for all Kansans, not threaten to retire future generations of public safety workers, nurses and teachers into poverty.

In other action the committee passed a bill out of the committee which would increase the number of days a person would need to spend in retirement before returning to work from 30 to 60 days. The committee was reacting to information that the current 30 day retirement may not be enough under current IRS rules.