

## Appropriations Drama!

Marc Rhoades (R-Newton) has resigned as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee apparently over disagreements with leadership on school finance. Rhoades had gotten into some hot water over the inclusion of policy changes in HB 2773 that had not been approved by leadership. House leaders then introduced a different school funding bill, HB 2774. In a Committee meeting last Wednesday, Rhoades announced that members could bring any and all amendments to the process.

Now, four days later, Rhoades resigns the chairmanship just before hearings begin. He is no longer to be a member of the Appropriations Committee. Speaker Merrick maintains that Rhoades was not asked to resign. Rhoades says he's out because the bill from leadership is unsustainable and he can't support it.

The hearing began at 9:00 this morning with an announcement by new Chairman Gene Suellentrop that there was a major balloon amendment that would be offered. He felt it best to review the amendment first so that conferees could address it in their testimony.

The amendment makes some significant changes to the bill. Primarily it rolls most of the finance provisions from the Senate leadership school finance plan introduced last week.

Under the amendment, the bill would

- Fund both the LOB and capital outlay state aid called for by the Supreme Court,
- Eliminate non-proficient at-risk weighting,
- Reduce high density at-risk weighting,
- Set BSAPP to be "at least \$3838,"
- Revert to current law on transportation weighting but fund only 95% of it, and
- Cut virtual schools weighting by over 50%,

There are also a couple of changes to policy provisions.

- The innovative schools program had been set to expand to 20% of districts with limitations on the kinds of districts that could be selected above the current 10% cap.

Under the amendment, the expansion is cut to 15% with the same limitations.

- A section on the tort claims act was deleted.

The section allowing anyone with a STEM degree to teach math, science, or financial literacy remains intact.

Speaking today were opponents of the bill. Even though the balloon amendment was just released this morning, it must have been leaked to someone because representatives of the virtual schools community were out in force. The hearing went from 9:00 to 11:00 and then from 1:30 to 3:00. Most of the testimony was opposition to the cut in virtual schools weighting. A couple of school districts weighed in on the reduction to transportation funding and KASB opposed the reductions in weightings being used to pay for equity.

KNEA stood in opposition to the teacher licensure provision, the innovative schools expansion, and the funding cuts.

The hearing will continue tomorrow morning with the proponents of the bill scheduled to speak.

### ***Take action!***

You can join the chorus of Kansas calling for a clean school funding bill! Add your name to the online petition at <http://changekansas.org/action/petition/pass-a-clean-education-budget-bill-now><sup>[1]</sup>.

Contact your legislators today and urge them to drop policy from HB 2774 and pass a clean school finance bill. Use the KNEA legislative contact portal by clicking here<sup>[2]</sup>.

### **Brownback's own council of economic advisors finds that the Brownback tax plan is not working**

This is bad news! In a report released in March by the Council of Economic Advisors housed in the Kansas Department of Commerce, it was revealed that the Brownback tax plans passed in 2012 and 2013 are failing to meet the benchmarks set by the Administration.

Governor Brownback has said, "*These economic metrics will allow us to determine the state's relative economic position as it relates to the six-state region and the nation, and to monitor in a timely manner if our policies and initiatives are having the desired economic effect.*"

The report shows that Kansas is lagging behind the other states in our region in terms of employment, population, gross domestic product, personal income, private industry wage level, and private business establishment. It's not a pretty picture!

Another report by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities found similar results and drew criticism from the Brownback administration.

Click here to see the report from the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors<sup>[3]</sup>.

Click here to see the report from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities<sup>[4]</sup> (also released in March).

1. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=eb84ca12449314db41bbcec873edee4bdc1e1ed33a452576c248e355bbd5873cab9a36878dba32a4>
2. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=eb84ca12449314db6d34663f6298bc5b12b994b3a6b49012e5a81bf1d5bc653b8c16327481078aaa>
3. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=eb84ca12449314dbadd8ae21fa6362505cd7e61c22c5b7ff63e336da4678ae7945140b23a5637030>
4. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=eb84ca12449314db2693231bd39cdee1b47171b23d6a72d9cd4f4fd7c789d99a0637224c9b2ac564>