

KNEA Statement on the signing of HB 2506 into law

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 every day, 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.

What the press is saying

From the Salina Journal: "The teacher is not the problem. The inmates are running the asylum in our great state of Kansas." - See more at:

<http://www.salina.com/editorials/Hulse-column-for-Tuesday--April-22--2014#sthash.SVSib7yi.dpuf>^[1]

From the Lawrence Journal-World: "If I were to characterize House Bill 2506 I would say it is ill-advised and that its adoption without adequate discussion and public debate, let alone serious thought, is most unfortunate. Like other actions of the Kansas Legislature in recent years it is a legislative solution to a non-problem that will probably significantly erode the quality of public education in Kansas. That is something I believe many, if not most, Kansans would consider most unfortunate and surely not in the public interest." See more at: <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2014/apr/23/opinion-law-erodes-teachers-rights/?opinion>^[2]

From the Winfield Daily Courier: "Due process in the face of termination matters a great deal in recruiting strong teachers to come to Kansas and stay - especially to rural Kansas." See more at: http://www.winfieldcourier.com/top_story/article_65d37da6-ca9d-11e3-bbfb-0019bb2963f4.html^[3]

From the Pittsburg Morning Sun: "The Legislature's fix is crude, ill-considered, and out of place. If the governor signs this bill, teachers could be fired for failing popular student-athletes, or teaching controversial, but true facts about science or human

sexuality. The woes of urban school districts in other states cannot justify what the Legislature did here." Read more:

<http://www.morningsun.net/article/20140422/Opinion/140429949#ixzz2zj02nnjs>^[4]

What can you do now?

First, continue to contact legislators, thanking those that voted NO on HB 2506 and expressing your disappointment with those that voted YES.

Look for calls to action from your local and UniServ leaders. All over Kansas, teachers and friends of public education are showing up at legislative forums and events to express their feelings about this attack on Kansas teachers and schools. From challenging legislators in forums to picketing appearances by the Governor, make your voice known.

Get involved in politics. Make a contribution to your KNEA Political Action Committee or to a legislator supports teachers. Volunteer to work in a campaign for friends of education. Let your UniServ office know that you are ready to help.

Come November, let's remember.

1. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=3b3d3f623e66654339d759f5c4a09a5fb17ba53fa107df4d590219e9a69a5c95bf46709f4d458697>
2. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=3b3d3f623e6665439568246a479ac9d54a3fb620e36b46846481c9350f8a70bcd3bdfbf2bf2ec0de>
3. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=3b3d3f623e66654394a5981ca173d2bef1f0b93420da5063b7fb44d6afbe7b266f91cf333d1b3ff0>
4. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=3b3d3f623e6665435c0219218ab92117aa6f429f26a0f4203466b52cf62eda715319fb0ef204f0a7>