

Really, Governor?

We heard the other day that maybe Governor Brownback is changing his behavior when it comes to avoiding teachers and supporters of Kansas public schools.

While he has been noted for canceling appearances (El Dorado, Fort Hays State) and sneaking in and out of back entrances (Lawrence, Wichita State) apparently to avoid having to look teachers in the eye, perhaps the press coverage has convinced him he needs to own up to his actions. During an appearance in Wichita this week, he actually walked past the picketing teachers and even spoke to them.

Of course, this has the potential for real risk for the Governor. He might actually get a few questions tossed his way that he really doesn't want to answer. How about these for a start:

Did you really cut \$8 million out of at-risk programs and then give away \$10 million to corporations willing to fund religious and unaccredited private schools?

Did you really override the authority of the elected State Board of Education by endorsing the end of training and licensure standards for math and science teachers?

Do you really believe it's a good idea to fire teachers who stand up for services for their students or report health and safety violations or enforce high standards for student work or move too high up on the salary schedule or don't wear a tie? Your bill lets teachers be fired and never given a reason or the right to have the facts weighed in a fair due process hearing.

Because, Governor, these are just a few of the things your school finance bill does. And these are just a few of the actions you have taken that have angered teachers, parents, and supporters of public education.

It's also funny how you say you support local control. That stripping teachers of fair dismissal procedures is simply turning the decision over to local folks. Are we really supposed to believe you support local control when you gladly embraced a bill stripping cities, counties, and school districts of local control when it comes to restricting

weapons on public property?

You can talk but actions speak far louder than words.

Limiting your voice in elections

We love cowboy movies and one of our favorites is John Wayne's Big Jake. There's a point in the film where Wayne is meeting Richard Boone to negotiate trading a ransom for his grandson. He notes that there are a number of Boone's criminal associates hidden around ready to kill Wayne if he tries anything. Wayne tells Boone, "You must figure I'm a real dangerous man."

Well that's kind of the way we felt as we watched conservative Republicans and the Governor push through changes to voter registration.

Through the years, different groups have suggested that voters register with one party or another in order to vote in the primary election. There is lots of speculation about why this is done.

The reality is that in Kansas most districts are so solidly Republican that there isn't a Democratic candidate. For voters in those districts, waiting to vote in the general election is simply abandoning your own voice in who will represent you in the capitol. The same could be said of the few solidly Democratic districts where Republican candidates often don't file.

In the past, one had until 14 days before an election to register for a particular party. This came after the filing deadline and so voters would know if they would have a general election battle in which to cast a vote. Under the new law, the decision about party affiliation would have to take place before the filing deadline. Since the law doesn't take effect until July 1, 2014, this year one can choose party affiliation up until June 30. For future elections that would be moved to May 31 meaning voters will not necessarily know if there will be a general election or not. Some voters could essentially lose their voice when it comes to electing their legislators.

So moving into future elections, voters will have to think about their choices before they will know what those choices are. Democrats in heavily Republican areas will need to choose early whether or not they want to vote in the Republican primary. Likewise Republicans in heavily Democratic districts will have to do the same thing. And at least

for now, unaffiliated voters may re-register at the polling place and choose a primary in which to vote.