

The War on Teachers, Police, Fire Fighters, Highway Workers, Nurses, Correctional Officers...etc., etc.

You might remember earlier this year when Kansas Speaker of the House Ray Merrick (R-Stilwell) proclaimed in the press that public employees are "non-producers" - folks who just take and take and contribute nothing to society.

Well, it seems that a lot of state legislators and Governor Brownback must agree.

Yesterday we reported on the introduction in the Senate of two bills (SB 176 and SB 179) designed to end collective bargaining of anything other than "minimum salaries." Public employees would lose the right to mediation and fact finding; they would lose the right to file a grievance. The Public Employment Relations Board (management and labor working together) would be abolished and all power for decision making handed to the Secretary of Labor (appointed by the Governor).

At the same time, the Governor announced a sweeping change in hiring practices and rules for state employees. His plan would change jobs to classified status, making most state employees "at will" employees who can be let go at any time for any reason (or no reason). He plans to end seniority considerations in staff reductions. His plan would create civil servants rewarded more for loyalty to the administration than for service to the citizens.

We can't understand why it is that public employees have become the enemy of the state. Frankly, we appreciate having public employees plow the snow from our street or help us after an accident. We love the men and women who keep criminals behind bars, who fill the potholes, who watch over our state parks, who provide services to foster families. And of course, we love our school employees who take care of children every day.

Does anyone still need to be reminded that public employees are NOT the reason we have no money in the state bank account. Governor Brownback and the Kansas Legislature consciously worked to bankrupt the state treasury through their income tax cuts that benefit only the wealthiest Kansans leave those who depend on quality state services with nothing.

Senate Education again to take up collective bargaining

You will remember that we reported on a hearing the Senate Education Committee on SB 136, the PNA modification bill crafted and supported by KASB, KNEA, USA/KS, and KSSA. The entire education community stood up in favor of a specific bill modifying PNA. No one appeared in the committee to oppose SB 136. Sounds like a pretty easy decision - all educators support it, no one opposes it.

But...next week the Senate Education Committee will hold a hearing on SB 176, the bill we described above and in yesterday's report. A bill the whole education community opposes; a bill which will send the teaching profession back to the turn of the century (and we're talking about 1899-1900, not 1999-2000!

The hearing will be on Wednesday of next week. You can contact the members of the Senate Education Committee on this issue by clicking on their names below:

Sen. Steve Abrams^[1]

Sen. Tom Arpke^[2]

Sen. Anthony Hensley^[3]

Sen. Vickie Schmidt^[4]

Sen. Dan Kerschen^[5]

Sen. Pat Pettey^[6]

Sen. Molly Baumgardner^[7]

Sen. Dennis Pyle^[8]

Sen. Jeff Melcher^[9]

Sen. Caryn Tyson^[10]

Sen. Steve Fitzgerald^[11]

Other Big Issues: Elections and Courts

Most KNEA members will be as surprised as we were to learn that teachers hold total dominion over the election of local school board members. But that's just why, according to Senator Mitch Holmes (R-St. John), that he had to introduce Senate Bill 171, a measure to move local elections from April of odd numbered years to November of even numbered years. We suppose that's the same rationale for making those elections partisan - requiring party identification.

We are not surprised to find that city and county commissions and school boards across the state are passing resolutions opposing SB 171. They don't want the elections closest to the people to become the partisan circus we see on the state and federal level where dark money groups on both sides spend small fortunes to vilify candidates. Our local elections do not need to become more focused on character assassination than on local issues of real concern.

At the same time we've been watching hearings on constitutional amendments that would abolish merit selection of justices and replace it with political whim.

Angry mostly about judicial decisions on school finance - from Montoy to Gannon - Brownback and his allies are trying to either secure for themselves the appointment of justices who will rule more in line with their ideology or, not achieving that, turn appointment to the supreme court into popular partisan elections.

Either way, the court would become beholden not to the rule of law but rather to the administration or campaign donors.

Regardless of what anyone thinks of a particular court ruling, everyone wants to know that should they need to seek justice from a court, they can count on a court that puts the rule of law and fairness above their appointment or re-election campaign.

Senate Education Still Working Homeschoolers in Sports Bill

The Senate Education continued working SB 60 today, the bill that would permit homeschool or private school children to participate in extracurricular or co-curricular programs in public schools.

A number of amendments offered by Sen. Vickie Schmidt (R-Topeka) were adopted this afternoon but she still has one more which will have to wait until Monday as the committee needed to adjourn and go to the floor.

Schmidt's amendments would ensure that:

- Non-public school students must pay the same participation fees as public school students,
- Non-public school students are subject to KSHAA rules,
- District liability insurance must cover non-public school students,
- Non-public school students must attest to academic requirements,
- There is no guarantee of a spot on the team; the coach/sponsor decides,
- Non-public school students must submit proof of immunization.

That's when the discussion ended, with Schmidt having one more amendment to go. So...More on Monday!

Links

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