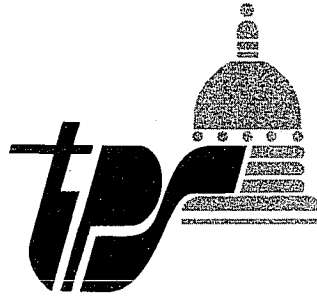


House Taxation
Date: 2/9/12
Attachment: 14



February 9, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2560, the Governor's tax proposal. The School Board of Topeka Public Schools adopted a formal position on tax policy for the first time this year. School districts rely on state funds and local property taxes to fund our public education system and special education programs for the community. Due to the recent increase in state sales tax, the current proposal to decrease income tax revenues, and the Governor's proposal to shift school funding burden to local taxpayers, the board opposes HB 2560.

The current tax structure should be maintained to ensure adequate funds are available for crucial state functions such as education. A sound tax system is one where sales tax, property tax and income tax are balanced. HB 2560 not only cuts state taxes without providing offsetting state revenues, but also inevitably shifts the burden for funding schools to local taxpayers and thereby further disequalizes Kansas' education system. With less income tax revenues, the state budget will not contain sufficient revenues to fund vital state functions, such as human services and the state's education system. In fact, if both HB 2560 and HB 361 (the Governor's school finance plan) pass, an increase in local property taxes will be necessary to maintain our current budget.

At best, HB 2560 will put the state in a position where it cannot afford to meet its Constitutional obligation to provide suitable funding for education, and will in turn pass the burden to local taxpayers. At worst, it would erode the quality of the education we provide by failing to adequately fund a suitable education for our students.

You will find attached a copy of Topeka Public Schools legislative positions, including the Board's position on taxes.

House Taxation
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Toppeka Public Schools Legislative Positions

Toppeka Public Schools Board of Education promotes the following tenets as guidance for Kansas policy-makers as they make decisions that will impact the students and families we serve.

School Finance:

Kansas policymakers should adhere to the Kansas Constitutional requirements of suitably and equitably fund education with a state finance system.

Such funding for education should be reliable, fair and financially sustainable, and not overly reliant on local funding or limited by political pressures. Allowance for spending on education should be directly tied to the educational needs of the state's student population in order to adequately prepare students for success in the workforce.

The current funding formula is sound. The main problem is that it is not funded.

Any formula revision must take into consideration the Legislature's own 2006 study showing:

1. a direct link between urban poverty and low student achievement and a correlation between spending and student achievement, and
2. the additional challenge and financial burden of educating at risk students in urban settings.

About Toppeka Public Schools

- Enrollment: more than 14,000 students
- Free & Reduced Lunch Students: 77%
- Special Education Students: 19%
- English Language Learner Students: 8%
- Student Ethnicity:
 - Caucasian - 42%
 - Hispanic - 27%
 - African-American - 20%
 - Native American - 2%
 - Other - 9%



Key components for the school finance formula:

The formula must maintain weightings for special populations in order to suitably address the wide array of students Kansas educates.

The formula must adequately fund the base per pupil because per pupil funding is the primary source of funding for the regular classroom.

The formula must consider the cost of educating today's students from year to year, with consideration to inflation.

The formula must balance local effort with the state obligation to suitably fund education under the Kansas constitution, and thereby balance increased local funding options with increased state equalization aid. It should also mediate reliance on local property taxes.

The formula must link local effort with state equalization responsibilities and strike a balance between districts with low property valuations and those with high property values, as well as the excess costs required to educate special populations.

Districts must be afforded flexibility in operational funds to allow each district to meet the unique needs of the community and it's student population.

Kindergarten must be full day and funded in the formula consistent with grades 1-12.

Taxes:

The requirement tax structure should be maintained to ensure adequate funds are available for general state functions such as education. A sound tax system is one where sales tax, property tax, and income tax are balanced. Above all, cutting state taxes without providing offsetting revenues would, at best, shift the burden for funding schools to local taxpayers and thereby further disqualify Kansas education system. At worst, it would erode the quality of the education we provide for our students.

Other issues of interest:

Quality early childhood programs are vital to a student success. Toppeka remains committed to a comprehensive P-12 educational system.

Career pathways and technical education should be promoted, with an emphasis on public private partnerships that provide a continuum of exposure to possible career opportunities for students.

The Kansas State Board of Education must continue to be elected to determine educational policy for the state's primary and secondary schools as established in Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution.

Tuition tax credits, voucher systems, charter schools, or choice plans to aid private elementary or secondary schools are not subject to the same legal requirements and accountability standards as public school systems. The issue is not educational "choice" but using public funds to support schools that can discriminate in admission, provide sectarian religious instruction and "compete" under different rules than public schools.