

**LEGISLATIVE E-REPORT
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KANSAS**

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EDUCATION

SPECIAL ED FUNDING

The Senate Ways and Means Committee added back in \$25.4 million for special education in this year's budget. They added it into HB2014, a budget bill already passed in the House. It was debated on the floor and passed today. This will increase the state's share of special education costs. Senate Vice President John Vratil, a Leawood Republican, said the boost would keep Kansas in compliance with federal spending requirements and avoid a financial penalty.

This bill also adds back a small portion of the base aid per pupil that the House cut. Under this bill this year's base would be reduced by \$65 rather than \$75 dollars.

(The Associated Press reported that House members and Brownback's staff did not fund the special education line item, arguing that it was unclear if Kansas would be penalized for the lower spending amount and if the state was it would come in future budget years so there will be a contest in the conference committee, also. Keep watch.)

We need the make sure that vote holds on final action in the morning on the Senate floor. This \$25 million is needed to comply with the "maintenance of effort" requirement or we LOSE \$100 million in federal funds over the next five years. That would equate to 25% of the special education funding we receive from the federal government.

Contact your state Senators and urge them to support HB2014 when it comes to the floor for final action in the morning. Find Your Legislator

- **Locate your home on the map or by address, then find out who represents you in the Kansas House, Senate, State Board of Education and U.S. House of Representatives.**
<http://kslegislature.org>

OR

KNEA has set up a convenient [link to send your message](#) *From Kansas Families for Education*

K-12 EDUCATION

Education would receive the biggest increases from senators, with \$8.6 million added to compensate the state's 289 school districts for increases in the number of students on free- or reduced-priced lunches. Another \$5.7 million would cover the overall increase in the number of students in Kansas schools.

A legislative committee has approved drafting a bill that would **abolish the Kansas Board of Regents and the Kansas State Board of Education**, creating a secretary of education appointed by the governor.

The move comes as legislators approach the deadline for proposing bills in their chamber of origin. Under the proposal, the Kansas Board of Regents — all nine of whom are appointed by the governor — and the state school board — whose 10 members are elected — would be abolished and a secretary of education would be appointed to lead a consolidated state education agency. Rep. Clay Aurand, R-Courtland, chairman of the House Education Committee, said he expects to hold hearings on the proposal in early March.

HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE

BY Paul Johnson- LWVK Legislative Liaison

Kansas has 187,418 higher education students with 93,131 at state universities, 81,171 at community colleges, 8,068 at Washburn and 5,048 at the six technical colleges. State Higher Education State General Funding (SGF) peaked at \$853 million in 2009 and fell to \$747 million in 2010 with the Governor recommending \$752 million for 2012. In 1992, 49% of the funding for State Universities came from SGF while in 2009 the percentage was down to 28%. The national average of State and Local Public Higher Education support per student in 2008 was \$7,059 while in Kansas that figure was \$6,125. The average debt of students graduating from the 6 Kansas' universities is \$20,163.

The national average for Per Capita State Need-Based Financial Aid Contributions per Student (2008-09) was \$203 while the figure for Kansas was \$63.12 making Kansas 36th of the 50 states. State universities have 818 state-owned buildings with 30 million square feet and represent 2/3rds of all state buildings. 75% of these buildings are at least 30 years old and total deferred maintenance is over \$800 million while the replacement value for these buildings is \$7.3 billion.

MENTAL HEALTH CUTS

They've cut mental health centers and mental health funding by approx. 50% in the past 2-3 years, and now this. Rather than provide adequate funding for adequate staffing SRS is recommending closing beds at Rainbow Mental Health Facility in Kansas City. [League member, Linda Johnson, comments "...and do what? Put them in jail?]

Hearings going on : HB 2334 creates a minimum time for completing competency evaluations and adopts the American Bar Association standards for determining competency. Requires professional forensic training for evaluators (prefer forensic psychologists, but not always available). Proposed legislation lists the factors that an individual must be able to understand (Florida model). The hearing was full of complaints from prosecuting attorneys about failure of the system to provide timely evaluations – the unprofessional and poor quality of many of these evaluations, and the public safety problem created by people who are prosecuted again and again for violent offenses but remain a danger to the public. Testimony spoke to the insufficient treatment provided at Larned State Hospital.

UPPER ARKANSAS RIVER CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

BY Paul Johnson

This CREP is a dedicated Conservation Reserve Program focused on water conservation along the Upper

Arkansas River corridor from Hamilton County to western Rice County. This CREP has been in place for three years and has retired 22,162 acre-feet of water (as much water as Dodge City uses) and retired 93 irrigation wells. This CREP is a voluntary incentive based program for producers to enroll irrigated acres in the eligible area for 14-15 years, permanently retire the water rights on the enrolled area, and put the acres into a conservation cover (typically a native grass). In return, the producer receives an upfront, per acre payment from the State and an annual payment from USDA – Farm Service Agency, plus cost share on the specific conservation efforts. As of September 2010, a total of 65 contracts on 10,766 acres have been approved by the State of Kansas at a cost of \$650,000. These one time upfront State payments are matched by annual producer payments from FSA of \$1.3 million, based on rates of \$110 to \$140 per irrigated acre.

The plan was to expand this program from 10,766 acres to a maximum of 28,950 acres. The funding for the State's share comes from the State Water Plan. This CREP program has given these area producers a viable option for starting grass stands on these highly erodible soils while irrigation water is still available and with the financial opportunity and incentive to do it. The Governor has proposed terminating this program immediately. www.scc.ks.gov

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAM (LEPP)

BY Paul Johnson

LEPP was started in 1990 to enable local authorities to develop water protection plans that are customized for their areas and compliment other water quality efforts being waged by state and federal agencies. Plans developed with LEPP funds describe actions that communities will take to manage private septic system waste water treatment, solid waste, hazardous waste, non-point source pollution, and private water wells. Over the 20 years of operation, \$32.5 million in grants have been made to counties. Last year 104 counties participated in the \$980,000 of grants. Kansas Department of Health and Environment requested \$1.4 million for 2012 all from the State Water Plan. The Governor has proposed to completely eliminate this program. KDH&E will still provide the technical assistance for this program but no grant funding. That cost will now fall to the counties if they can afford to continue these activities.

EFFICIENCY KANSAS: The Kansas Energy Office created this program with \$38 million in federal stimulus dollars to establish a revolving loan fund to provide low-cost financing for energy-efficiency improvements to homes and small businesses. This loan can be processed through 100 lender branches across Kansas or 22 partner utilities. An energy audit is required and this program funds \$300 of the average \$400 cost with the customer paying the first \$100. For complete information on this program: click www.efficiencykansas.com

GOVERNMENT ETHICS COMMISSION FUNDING

Paul Johnson

Senate Bill 102 increases filing fees for candidates, political committees and lobbyists to cover the state funding reductions recommended by the Governor. These filing fees will cover a \$200,000 reduction. The mix of funding changes from 65% State General Fund and 35% fees in 2011 to 70% from fees and 30% from the State General Fund in 2012.

The estimate for 2012 is that there will be 1,750 candidates for state senate, state representative, city councils in first class cities and boards of education in districts that have at least 35,000 students. There are 1,100 registered lobbyists. It has been 10 years since these filing fees were increased. The fees for lobbyists were tripled up to a maximum of \$1,080 while the filing fees for candidates were only increased \$15 and \$20. The reasoning is that filing fees should not be a

barrier to citizens participating in electoral campaigns.

Senate Bill 103 brings Kansas into compliance with federal election law by ***allowing ballots to be filed by mail, facsimile, electronic mail or other electronic method*** authorized by the secretary of state. This same bill passed the Senate last year 39-0 but was not heard by the Kansas House. In fact, no Senate-passed election law bills were debated by the Kansas House last year.

Senate Bill 126 mandates that ***no candidate*** for elected office ***shall appear in a public service*** announcement or advertisement during the 60 days before the election.

