

June 5, 2016

Governor Sam Brownback
State Capitol
Topeka, KS 66612

Speaker Ray Merrick
State Capitol
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Governor and Speaker:

While a majority of legislators and you may believe that the school finance appropriations are adequate and the methodology appropriate, the Kansas Supreme Court has consistently ruled otherwise. Our U.S. and Kansas Constitutions provide for three independent and equal branches of government. The Executive branch can veto legislation passed by the Legislature. The Legislature reviews the Governor's proposals and passes, amends, or fails to pass them. The Supreme Court reviews the collective actions of the Executive and Legislative branches in terms of whether they meet Constitutional standards.

Just as the Legislature and Governor may disagree with each other, so too may Legislators and the Governor disagree with the Court's decisions. Yet, we must recognize that within the authority granted by the people, all of us are striving to uphold the Kansas Constitution to the best of our abilities, even when we disagree.

During my legislative service, the goal consistently was to have 60% of state aid go to the classroom. That was a target agreed upon by Republicans and Democrats, Legislators and Governors. Including State contributions to the teacher's retirement system as part of aid to education does not bring us closer to the objective of improving educational opportunities. The inadequate direct funding of educational opportunities indicates that the Legislature and Governor should accept the Supreme Court's decisions on the adequacy of the school finance procedure and actual funding levels.

Therefore, I urge you to call a Special Legislative Session to address the adequacy and equity of education appropriations. During these difficult fiscal times, finding additional money for education will be challenging, but there are options for new revenues and/or reprioritizing existing programs and appropriations. A Constitutional crisis between the Supreme Court and the Legislature and Governor does not serve the best interests of our students, teachers, or Kansans at large.

Sincerely,

Tom Sloan
45th District Representative