



**NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL**

# Sydney Carlin

## State Representative 66th District

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### **Court Rules Legislature Underfunding Education**

On Thursday, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled that K-12 education funding levels violate the state Constitution.<sup>1</sup> This case dealt with the issue of equality. The state Constitution requires the legislature to provide funding to the school districts in an equitable manner. In 2014 the legislature eliminated the old school funding formula and replaced it with a block grant system. The school districts challenged the block grant as not allocating funds equitably.

The court has instructed the legislature to create a funding formula by June 30<sup>th</sup>. The court did not provide a specific amount the legislature must provide but it is estimated the amount is near \$70 million for this school year.

This opinion was the first of two anticipated judgments in the school finance case.<sup>2</sup> The state Constitution requires the legislature to “adequately” fund K-12 schools and the anticipated second opinion will deal with that issue.

Funding of our schools has been cut several times the last few years and funding has not kept up with the growing enrollment & need for new equipment/facilities, we are starting to see the results. School budgets are cut, teachers are fleeing the state, and districts have to make tough choices on what programs to offer students in light of continued budget cuts. I support a strong public education in this state and I applaud this decision.

### **House Passes Budget**

With a \$170 million shortfall the House debated and passed a budget this week. The final vote was close, passing 68-56, but all Democrats voted against this budget.<sup>3</sup> The budget relies on more sweeps of association funds, transfers from the state Highway Department, delaying KPERS payments, selling the Kansas Bioscience Authority and other state owned property, this is not a sustainable method of managing state responsibilities.

The Senate also passed their budget bill this week as well and it is fairly similar to the version the House passed. Conference committees will be appointed to iron out the differences and the conference committee report will be voted on by both chambers the coming weeks.

I offered an amendment to place a cap on bonding at KDOT of 18% of the total revenue from all state sources which carefully defined revenue sources and not including any federal aid. My parents raised me to be fiscally conservative and I have taught that to my own children. It would be irresponsible to support a budget when the administration has continued to refuse the revenue crisis. I do not support the continued sweep of funds, use of other one-time money, bankrupting our road systems and punishing our state employees.

### **Lots of Action in House Education Committee**

The House Education Committee held several hearings this session that would greatly affect public education in Kansas. The committee debated a bill that would consolidate many school districts. The bill

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.kscourts.org/Cases-and-Opinions/opinions/SupCt/2016/20160211/113267.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article59539796.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article59539796.html>

received strong opposition from school districts, teachers and parents. The Committee has not actually voted on the bill yet, and the chair has indicated he will not hold a vote on it, but we will keep our eyes open.

Also considered in the House Education Committee was a bill that removed due process rights for teachers and professors of two-year colleges.<sup>4</sup> This bill received strong opposition in committee as well from professors and administrators. The Committee has not voted on the bill yet but it is expected to in the coming weeks.

Another bill that was in committee was one that removed the gifted program from special education. The bill received lots of backlash from the public and schools, so much so, the legislator who introduced the bill eventually withdrew it from consideration.

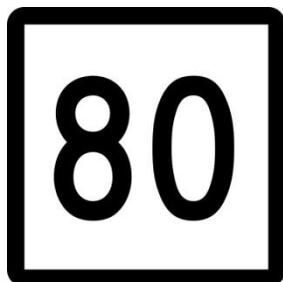
Each of these bills is a continuation of the attacks on teachers and education in our state that we have seen from legislators the last few years. Our children's education will continue to suffer under this mismanagement and attacks.

### **Democrats Unveil Public Safety Bills**

This week Democrats championed bills to improve public safety for Kansans.<sup>5</sup> Due to years of mismanagement by the governor and the Republican legislature we have real safety concerns in our state.

#### **Democratic Solutions Include:**

- Senate Bill 350: Giving the Highway Patrol the needed funds to address the trooper shortage. To create a staffing and training fund for the Kansas Highway Patrol.<sup>6</sup> Currently, there are dangerously low amounts of troopers in our state due to trooper turnover and a lack of funding to hire additional troopers. The reason for the turnover, as the head of the Highway Patrol has stated, is pay has been stagnant for years and many troopers have left the force to serve in other states or other communities where the pay is more competitive.<sup>7</sup>
- House Bill 2559: Establishes minimum staffing levels for state agencies/facilities to maintain security and safety.<sup>8</sup> There have been several safety incidents in our prisons due to the lack of Corrections Officers. Just like the troopers, Corrections Officers have been leaving the state looking for better opportunities. Also, staffing shortages has created a safety concern at our state hospitals. Due to the staff shortages one state hospital has lost the ability to receive Medicare funds.
- House Bill 2452: Prohibits giving, selling, or transferring any firearm to a person who is identified in the terrorist screening database, or any other database, maintained by the FBI.<sup>9</sup> Keeping guns out of the hands of terrorists is a common sense solution to help keep Kansans safe.



The Kansas Highway Patrol has about 80 fewer troopers than it did a decade ago.<sup>8</sup> This results in longer response times and communities that are less safe.

Keeping the people of Kansas safe should be job one for any governor and every legislator and that is why we are busy introducing proven, common sense fixes to our state's growing public safety problems.

### **Docking Building Capitol Complex Utility Power Plant**

Governor Brownback has made a deal with Bank of America to finance a new Capitol Complex power plant with a lease purchase agreement – ignoring the process of bringing the final product before the Joint Committee on Building Construction. Legislators are visibly unhappy at this attempt to circumvent the Legislative Branch by the Executive Branch. Checks and Balances are an integral part of our Democracy. These issues continue to plague the state. This item was in the news last week and following

<sup>4</sup> <http://cjonline.com/news/2016-02-09/two-year-college-teachers-urge-lawmakers-not-eliminate-tenure>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wibwnewsnow.com/democrats-push-public-safety-agenda/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2015\\_16/measures/documents/sb350\\_00\\_0000.pdf](http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2015_16/measures/documents/sb350_00_0000.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.kansascity.com/news/government-politics/article52857080.html>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2015\\_16/measures/documents/hb2559\\_00\\_0000.pdf](http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2015_16/measures/documents/hb2559_00_0000.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2015\\_16/measures/documents/hb2452\\_00\\_0000.pdf](http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2015_16/measures/documents/hb2452_00_0000.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://cjonline.com/news/2016-01-08/kansas-highway-patrol-seeks-publics-views-troopers-having-visible-tattoos>

are some links: <http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article55475160.html> and <http://cjonline.com/news/2016-01-20/legislators-blast-20-million-deal-power-plant-topeka> and [www.kshs.org/resource/ks\\_preservation/2011v33n1.pdf](http://www.kshs.org/resource/ks_preservation/2011v33n1.pdf).

### Calling Card Plan from AT&T

1. Subject: All Customers of Kansan Calling Cards
2. Distribution: All State Agencies and Known Consumers of Kansan Calling Cards
3. From: Phil Wittmer, Chief Information Technology Officer, OITS
4. Purpose: Notification of AT&T's discontinuance of the calling card plan
5. Background: For many years AT&T has offered a corporate calling card plan allowing discount pricing for long distance phone calls. These cards have been beneficial to numerous state agencies, higher education, and local units of government. In May of 2015 AT&T announced plans to discontinue this service. New customers are not being allowed into the plan and existing customers are not being permitted to renew their contracts. Effective June 1, 2016 AT&T will not accept moves, additions, or change orders for existing cards.
6. Procedure: In response to AT&T's stated direction, the Kansas Calling Card service will be discontinued effective June 1, 2016. All existing customers are encouraged to seek alternatives and to notify OIT as cards are removed from service. On June 1, 2016 OITS will terminate the contract with AT&T and all cards will be disabled.

### Library Information

#### Explora

Needing to do some research, but don't know where to start? Wanting information on a topic from reliable sources? The Explora database may be exactly what you're looking for. Explora has a simple search bar, but searches multiple resources at once, giving you full text results from academic journals, magazines, and more. The articles can be saved, printed, or emailed. Explora also has AP photos and videos, and hundreds of Topic Overviews – like an encyclopedia. Plus, there are different versions of Explora, making it a great resource for all.

Explora General Research: <http://kslib.info/explora>

Explora for Kids: <http://kslib.info/explorakids>

Explora for High School Students: <http://kslib.info/explorahs>

If the pages above ask for a Kansas Library eCard number, you may get one at any library in Kansas. Most people will be automatically recognized as inside Kansas and will not need this step. Questions: [kslc@library.ks.gov](mailto:kslc@library.ks.gov) or 785-296-3296.

### Page Information

If you know of someone who would like to page for me, I have one open date. Please either call my office at 785-296-7657 or email my assistant, Dixie Sypher at [dixie.sypher@house.ks.gov](mailto:dixie.sypher@house.ks.gov) for more information.

### Pages in the Capitol this week:



*Paged on February 8, 2016*

*(Left to Right)*

*Sophia Jeffers*

*Jillian Harkin*

*Governor Brownback*

*Representative Carlin*

*Paris Mikinski*



Paged on February 9, 2016

(Left to Right)

*Jackson Walker*

*Harris de Noble*

*Governor Brownback*

*Cody Begnoche*

*Representative Carlin*

### **Keep in Touch**

It is a special honor to serve as your state representative. I value and need your input on the various issues facing state government. Please feel free to contact me with your comments and questions. My office address is Room 451-S, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, KS 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7657 or call the legislative hotline at 1-800-432-3924 to leave a message for me. Additionally, you can e-mail me at [sydney.carlin@house.ks.gov](mailto:sydney.carlin@house.ks.gov). You can also follow the legislative session online at [www.kslegislature.org](http://www.kslegislature.org). I'm working on my website, [www.sydneycarlin.com](http://www.sydneycarlin.com). You can connect to my Twitter & Facebook pages through Icons on the site. Even if I haven't posted, there are plenty of interesting news items there.

*Sydney Carlin, 66<sup>th</sup> District*