

Legislative Update from Rep. Tom Phillips
For more information view my website: www.TomPhillips.org



Dear Manhattan & Riley County constituents:

While I get to come home more than other legislators, it's still nice to have a few weeks at home to look forward to. It was a very long weekend in Topeka, as you have seen in the news. The work of deciphering complicated proposals, endless spreadsheets, and strategizing the best way to hold together a complicated mix of votes is exhausting, at times exhilarating, and in the end, frustrating.

Rather than adjourn as scheduled on Friday, we worked late into the night and reconvened Saturday morning. We then worked into early Sunday morning. I walked back to my apartment at 2:30 am thinking we were on recess until 5:00 am. I set my alarm for 4:30 am and walked back to the Capitol, only to discover we were re-scheduled to begin at noon on Sunday. I returned to my apartment by 5:15 am and slept a few more hours, and went back to start my day at 10:30 am. Our final vote occurred nearly twelve hours later and the House adjourned about 11 pm.

At that point, the House passed an education bill ([S Sub HB 2506](#)) with the minimum required 63 votes. The bill seeks to meet the Kansas Supreme Court's decision against the state for capital outlay and local equalization funding. Beyond funding, the bill implements a number of policies which had no hearing or consideration or were flat-out killed in a committee. I fear the future of education Kansas will be significantly – and negatively – impacted. I voted NO.

Documents:

[Bill Summary](#)

[Vote Record](#) (click on the Yea: 63 Nay: 57 hyperlink)

Details

I'm a good-news-first person, and then we'll talk about the impact of the bad news.

PROS

- In response to the *Gannon* case, the bill fully funds "equalization aid" known as Supplemental General State Aid to the tune of \$103.8 million;
- Adds \$25.2 million to fund capital outlay to districts who are eligible;
- Increases the Base State Aid Per Pupil (BSAPP) by \$14 (there's a caveat, keep reading);
- Increases local authority to 33% of the district's budget for one year with board approval, and beyond with voter approval;
 - For this election, boards can use a mail ballot approach.

The bill sets up a K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission to study how the state is meeting the Rose Standards for measuring adequacy of how well our



Contact Tom:

In Topeka:
785-296-6014
State Capitol, Room 512-A
tom.phillips@house.ks.gov
At home in Manhattan:
785-537-2194
tphillips3@cox.net

Resources

Tom Phillips serves the 67th District, which includes Manhattan and part of Riley County. He has lived in the district for more than 20 years.

[Map of the 67th District](#)
[City of Manhattan](#)
[Riley County](#)
[USD 383 Schools](#)
[Kansas State University](#)
[Manhattan Area Technical College](#)
[Kansas Legislature](#)
[Kansas Secretary of State](#)
[Kansas Governor](#)

Privacy Statement

Privacy Statement: Providing your personal or professional email address is a measure of your trust in me. This information will remain in my database and will not be sold or provided to any other user.

Paid for by Tom Phillips for State Representative, Richard Hayter, Treasurer

children are being educated..

CONS

For various constituencies, each of these are equally bad.

- The bill raises the money above through cuts to other areas of education:
 - Eliminates funds for non-proficient at-risk students – those who are not proficient in testing but who are not poor (\$4.8m);
 - Cuts at-risk weighting for part-time students (\$3.3m); and
 - Removes the current BSAPP and allows the legislature to appropriate whatever it wants, with a minimum of \$3,838 per student.
 - Policy measures included in the funding bill:
 - Eliminates due process rights for teachers who are fired: A lot of attention has been focused on the slippery slope of eroding policies which protect our teachers. The principle of the issue is certainly a concern but as a practical matter, it is in most districts' best interests to maintain due process for legal reasons, even though state law may no longer require it.
 - The state gets to count all federal, state, and local funding as the state's contribution to public education;
 - Vouchers:
 - Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program (aka Corporate Education Tax Credit Scholarship Program): Corporations donate to a fund from which students are granted scholarships to attend private schools. Donors receive tax credits for donations.
 - Eligibility:
 - Student must qualify for free lunch and attend a Title 1 school (high poverty)
 - Reside in Kansas while receiving the scholarship; AND
 - Be enrolled or eligible to enroll in a public school for the prior school year.
 - Funding: Corporate donors would receive a tax credit against their income taxes equal to 70% of their contribution, to a total of \$10 million in credits each fiscal year.
 - Implementation: A Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) would dole out \$8,000 scholarships from the fund to be used at any nonpublic school in Kansas. The school would simply have to let the SGO know they want to be eligible.

Many of these policy provisions had no hearing or were outright killed in the House Education Committee or were voted down on the House floor last year. Decisions over teacher tenure and school vouchers deserve to be made in adherence with our normal committee hearing process. Teachers, school administrators, and school board members should have been given the opportunity to weight in on the merit of a policy change. I find it extremely objectionable when the legislative process is hijacked in order to secure approval of policy by a select few inside the House. Moreover, there are still concerns about an unannounced meeting held after the House adjourned at 5 am which possibly violates the Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA) requiring transparency when a majority of committee members are in attendance. I don't expect much to come of this but will keep you informed. I personally think this was an oversight due to long hours and little sleep, not an attempt to conceal our proceedings or be devious.

Inspired by Public Service

Because all of this happened over the weekend, teachers who are normally in our classrooms during the week were able to come to Topeka to observe from the galleries. As I understand the unfolding of events, the KNEA was conducting a weekend conference in Topeka when word must have been delivered to attend the weekend session in the Capitol. Most politely watched the process and greeted us with support. The fact that so many gave up their free time to participate in the process was inspiring. I visited with at least four

teachers from the USD 383 district.

For all its ups and downs, I am proud to be a Kansan and to represent you in Topeka. I will continue to support what's best for all our students. I am pleased we funded our school districts in compliance with the Supreme Court ruling, but I am disappointed we wrapped the policy issues of school choice and teacher tenure around what should have been a clean appropriation bill. It's going to be a little more challenging with the policies in place from this bill, but I hope you will continue to support this important work to improve our public schools statewide.

It is an honor to serve you in Topeka. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of service to you.

Rep. Tom Phillips

[Click here](#) to unsubscribe from future mailings.