

2016 Legislative session begins Monday, Jan 11

K-12 education is about 50% of the state budget

Kansas state budget has not met projections after drastic income tax cuts (despite sales tax increases)

Current school finance plan (Block Grant) in place for 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years:

- Took 2014-15 funding levels, cut that, frozen for 2015-16 and 2016-17
- No increases for added students (BV has 245), inflation, higher costs of utilities, insurance, etc.
- Has been ruled unconstitutional by the court
- midyear cuts caused some districts without cash reserves to end the 2014-15 school year early
- Will legislators attempt a new formula in 2016 or put off until 2017?

Kansas Legislature's Interim Committee on K -12 Education has issued a report that has already been retracted and sent for revision based on its adherence to anti-public education statements from sources such as KPI (Kansas Policy Institute). The report advocates, among other things. increased state oversight of how local districts spend money, and how special needs students are handled.

This foreshadows the treatment public schools can expect in the upcoming session.

- Speaker of the House Ray Merrick (Stilwell) has removed moderate, pro-education members from the House Education Committee.
- Governor Brownback repeatedly refers to public schools as being inefficient and not having good results. Several of our Blue Valley legislators are agreeing with these statements.
- Entities are being pitted against one another in the need for funding- public safety against education, for example. Revenues will not fund all previously-funded services because they are in the red.
- Legislature has commissioned a statewide "efficiency study"; this has resulted in other states in drastic education cuts and changes in public ed- school closures, ch
- There is a general anti-public education sentiment, with many in the legislature in favor of measures to privatize schools - this may not be what they say, but is the end result they are after.

What can we do?

**Register to vote.** [jocoelection.org](http://jocoelection.org) (can do all online including submit proof of citizenship electronically)

**Email your legislators now.** [jocoelection.org](http://jocoelection.org) for email links (or for phone numbers if you prefer to call)

General advice for contacting elected officials:

- Thank the person for serving as an elected official; let him/her know you are a voter.
- Give background on yourself: "I've lived in the Blue Valley district for 20 years"... "I have three children in the Blue Valley School District"... "I moved here for the schools".
- State your concerns. It can be general or specific. For example: "School funding is very important to me. I do not want to see any further cuts to the district operating expenses. I support restoring income tax cuts that caused the budget deficit and I ask you to vote for necessary taxes to fund our public schools at the level they were funded before the tax cuts."
- Thank the person for reading your email or listening to your phone call.

**Stand Up Blue Valley** - on Facebook

- Formed by a group of parents concerned about the impact statewide legislative decisions have had on our schools.
- Source of pro-education, pro-Blue Valley, truthful and fact-checked information, links, recommendations for voters.
- August 2016 primary elections - read the FB post from Dec 18 for FAQ about registering to vote in the primary elections. To vote in Republican primary election, you must be a registered Republican.