



SMAC PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

April 28, 2021

After a three-week hiatus, the legislature will return to Topeka next week to wrap up the 2021 legislative session. These last two weeks or so are termed “veto week” as some time will be spent attempting to override the Governor’s vetoes. The legislature will also be focused on finalizing the state budget, which to date does not include funding for K-12 education.

In this update, we’ll address the concerns surrounding the K-12 budget and review some of the bills vetoed by Governor Kelly.

K-12 Education Budget

Probably the most important task for the legislature when they return is to set the budget for K-12 schools. Throughout the regular session bills were introduced to establish the K-12 budget, but instead of passing a clean budget bill, legislators attempted to attach elements that were harmful to public schools.

Although these attempts failed, there is no guarantee that leadership won’t try again during these last two weeks. These are some things we need to watch out for:

- Attempts to bring back voucher mechanisms that divert public tax dollars to private schools – expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship Program or the creation of Education Savings Accounts
- Using one-time federal dollars intended for COVID expenses (including expenses to address student learning loss) to supplant the state’s obligation to constitutionally fund public schools.

We need the legislature to pass a clean K-12 budget that constitutionally funds our schools as required by the Gannon Supreme Court case.

Bills Vetoed by Governor Kelly

Thankfully, the governor did veto all of the bills we’ve been concerned about that could have a detrimental impact on Kansas children, as well as some voter suppression bills that would have a wide-reaching impact on all Kansas concerns, including education. Below is a list of the vetoed bills along with the number of votes needed to override each of the governor’s vetoes.

A veto override requires a 2/3 majority (27 votes in the Senate and 84 votes in the House). One party has a 2/3 majority in both chambers. Party leadership will be putting a lot of pressure on their members to change their votes and override these vetoes.

TAX POLICY: Package of tax reforms resulting in \$285 million reduction in revenue (SB 50)

This is a significant amount, although it was reduced from prior versions of the bill. School funding has still not reached the levels required by the Gannon Supreme Court case, and

reductions in state revenue put that funding in jeopardy. It would be prudent to fully phase in the Gannon funding before making significant tax cuts.

(override would need 3 votes in the House)

GUN SAFETY: Lowering the conceal carry age from 21 to 18 (HB 2058)

This bill makes our students less safe. Many high school seniors are 18-years-old. Reducing the conceal carry age in Kansas to that of many high school seniors, puts this bill in opposition to gun safety line items in [SMSD's Legislative Platform](#) and [Kansas PTA's Legislative Priorities](#).

(override would need 4 votes in the House)

VOTER SUPPRESSION: Restricting advanced ballot delivery (HB 2183) & blocking election and judicial officials from modifying election laws even during a natural disaster (HB 2332)

Attempts to make voting more difficult are unnecessary, [especially when the Kansas Secretary of State presented to the legislature that the 2020 election was secure and fair](#).

(override of HB 2183 – 4 votes in the House; HB 2332 – 1 vote in the House)

Another concern around voter suppression is that the legislature could revive earlier bills that would shorten the time around advanced voting or mail-in ballots.

LEGISLATIVE OVERREACH – Graduation Requirements, Curriculum, Athletics

Requiring passing a civics exam and a financial literacy course to graduate (HB 2039)

Graduation requirements and curriculum decisions are the responsibility of the Kansas Department of Education and local school boards who have a better understanding of existing curriculum and the complexity of fitting in additional requirements to graduate. This is simply not the job of the legislature. Note, civics is already included in the Kansas curriculum and SMSD requires a financial literacy course to graduate.

(override would need 2 votes in the Senate & 12 in the House)

Banning trans girls from participating in girls' sports (SB 55)

This bill is one of a wave of bills being introduced in state legislatures across the country that target vulnerable trans youth. [Not only is this bill hurtful to trans youth and their families](#), but the Kansas High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) already has a policy in place. This is another example of legislative overreach and a [solution to a non-existent problem](#). There are just 5 trans girls competing across the state of Kansas, all without issue.

(override would need 8 votes in the House)

“Transgender children are not seeking to gain an unfair competitive advantage,” David said. “They are just children who want the opportunity to learn important skills of sportsmanship, competition, and teamwork with their peers.”

In Closing

As the school year comes to an end, so does the Kansas legislature. We have just a couple of weeks to stop these bills from becoming law and ensuring the legislature adequately funds our

public schools. Watch for ACTION ITEMS on the SMAC PTA Facebook page in the coming days and please share them with members of your PTA community. We need to make sure our legislators know we are watching.