



SMAC PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

January 18, 2021

There are two important things to address in today's update, the SMSD Bond referendum and the first "voucher" type bill introduced in the legislature.

SMDS Bond Referendum

As discussed in the previous legislative update, the [bond referendum](#) will be used for major maintenance and renovation needs across the district, and provide the budget flexibility to get our middle and high school teachers back to teaching the standard five out of seven periods, like their peers in neighboring districts. SMAC PTA has endorsed this bill and urges all PTA's to encourage SMSD parents to vote YES. smsdsupportourschools.com

We are now about a week from the election on January 26. It's a perfect time to find our ballots and drop them in a ballot box, to avoid mail delays. For misplaced ballots, call the Johnson County Election Office at (913) 715-6800.

**SMSD 2021 Bond
Ballot Drop Box Locations**

Avoid mail delays. Use a ballot drop box.
Ballots must be received by noon on Tuesday, January 26

JoCo Election Office 2101 E. Kansas City Rd, Olathe	Central Library 9875 W. 87th St, Lenexa
JoCo NE Offices 6000 Lamar Ave, Mission	Shawnee Library 13811 Johnson Dr, Shawnee

Misplaced your ballot? Call (913) 715-6800

VOTE YES FOR  SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Committee for Excellence smsdsupportourschools.com

HB2068 Expansion of Tax Credit Scholarship

We are one week into the legislative session and as expected, we are seeing the first bill that could have a detrimental impact on public education. House bill HB2068 appears to be a reintroduction of a bill that did not make it out of committee last year. Unfortunately, we lost a number of pro-public school legislators in November and this bill has a much better chance of passing in 2021.

Below is the description from one of last year's legislative updates to explain HB2068. Like last year, it is expected to be opposed by the Shawnee Mission School District, the Kansas PTA, and multiple education advocacy groups. For more details on their opposition from last year, read [SMSD](#) and [Kansas PTA's](#) official written testimony.

In short, this bill would expand the Kansas Hope Scholarship Act which was passed (despite opposition) in 2014. This Act allows public tax dollars to be diverted via tax credits to non-public schools for eligible students who choose to attend a private school. Currently, to qualify a student must be eligible for free lunch and attend a low performing elementary school. This bill expands the Act to include children eligible for reduced-priced lunch and removes the low performing elementary school requirement, meaning kids from any school can take advantage of the scholarship, diverting even more public tax dollars to non-public schools.

The three main reasons for opposition to this bill are:

1. Public tax dollars should be used for public schools. Diverting even more public dollars will reduce public school funding, just as our schools are starting to return to adequate funding levels after the Brownback tax cuts. As is, the Kansas Hope Scholarship Act allows for the diversion of \$10 million from the state general fund annually.
2. Non-public schools are not required to accept all students, which really gives the "choice" to the private non-public schools, versus the students. Private schools can deny admission to students with disabilities, mental health issues, LGBTQ students, students with same sex parents, differing religions, etc. Public dollars should be spent to educate all children.
3. By opening up the scholarship dollars to children in any public school, versus just underperforming elementary schools, the expansion seems to fly in the face of the original intent of the Hope Scholarship Act, which was to provide resources to low income elementary students who didn't have other options.

This is the first of what may be many pieces of legislation that could have a detrimental impact on public education funding. SMAC PTA encourages all parents to pay attention to the state legislature and how their state representatives and senators vote on education bills.