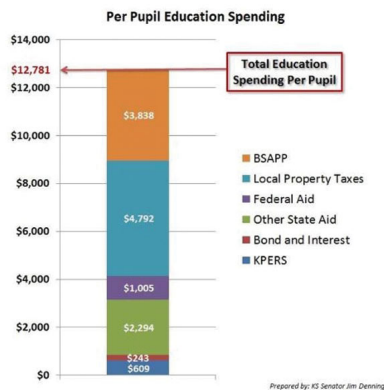


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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

The recent Kansas Supreme Court ruling requiring the State of Kansas to spend more on education is still being deciphered by many in Topeka and in school boardrooms across the state.

State Representative Reid Petty, a former school board member himself, said that while the state won't be required to increase funding by what the plaintiffs sought, there is still a misunderstanding of just how much Kansans invest in education.

In a release by Petty, he stated that Kansas spends \$12,781 per student per year, which he said was at an all-time high.



He also stated that the National Association of Budget Officers said that the average a state spends on education is 34.7 percent of the overall budget.

In Kansas, that total is 51 percent, putting Kansas fourth in the nation in percent allocated for education.

“The media from the left and the state Supreme Court, which is made up of Kathleen Sebelius appointees who have the mentality to tax and spend, have been effective in trying to create the thought that education funding is somehow lacking,” Petty said. “The numbers clearly prove otherwise.”

USD No. 480 Finance Director Jerry Clay recently stated that per pupil aid has decreased in recent years resulting in a \$3 million decrease to the local district when base aid dropped from \$4,400 per student to \$3,840.

“When you start multiplying that out, we lost about \$3 million since 2008-2009, Clay said.

But Petty said that money simply shifted.

“Many like to cherry pick education funding,” Petty said. “They like to point out that the state aid per pupil has gone up and down in different years and in years it went down means that education funding went down. The reality is money is sometimes moved around to different categories of spending, but the fact of the matter is the average amount of money spent per

student is \$12,781, which is at an all-time high. The Supreme Court even agreed in their ruling that money given to KPERS and other areas counts toward educational spending.”

Local property owners have noticed an increase on the mill levies for the school district, and that increase, according to the district, was to make up for the \$3 million reduction since 2008.

But Petty said education is provided extensive funding.

“There is plenty of money given to education,” he said. “There is also a lot of mismanagement with how money is spent in education. However, I do agree that we should look into potential different formulas as to how education is funded. I would like to see less state regulations with how money is spent locally. I remember when sitting on the board when there were times that the district had extra money in one area that wasn’t needed that could have been used in another area, but it wasn’t allowed.”

Both Petty and the district are hopeful that the recent ruling will help improve the funding method, although there will be no time to make adjustments in the current legislative session.

“The court’s decision wasn’t nearly as bad as we expected,” Petty said. “We don’t know the total amount of money they want to see us put in, but we know it is very minimal compared to what the seekers of the lawsuit asked for.”

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