



## **Talking Points for Communications with Legislators Support Our Schools & Communities**

KNEA has joined with a major coalition of concerned citizens: Kansans for Quality Communities. Three key points (in bold below) undergird the KQC message and KNEA's plan to advocate for our schools and communities. When preparing a letter to send to a legislator, utilize only one or two supporting points (the bulleted items) for any of the three major talking points.

### **1. Budget cuts hurt OUR KIDS: (share about the impact in YOUR school or district)**

- Staff reductions mean reduced help for kids: in the classrooms, in the counselor's office, in the library, in the after-school and additional learning opportunities.
- Classified staff reductions mean other staff members have to do that work on top of or in place of their normal work.
- Enrichment programs are slashed: field trips, art classes, extracurricular activities.
- Students' ability to be engaged is affected when the rooms are cold, lights are turned off, supplies are limited, staff stress is apparent.
- Students only get one chance at each grade—can we deny them our best effort?

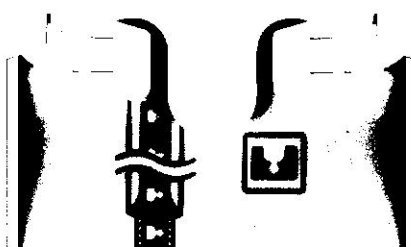
### **2. Investing in Schools AND Investing in Quality of Life strengthens our Communities**

- This crisis isn't just about schools; it's about our communities and way of life.
- Kansans value the quality of life we offer: caring communities, strong schools, clean air, good roads, and services for the elderly and needy.
- Good schools are an economic investment for the community and state: Companies are attracted to areas with good schools.
- As we develop new businesses, young people will need skills for the new jobs—that happens in schools.
- When other social services lag, schools often provide the additional support from counseling to donated food and clothing.
- More cuts are unsustainable. More cuts will eliminate direct and indirect jobs in nursing homes, schools, health care and social services, local government, public safety, and construction.
  - Thousands of our neighbors with disabilities will be placed on waiting lists for services.
  - State highways and bridges will continue to erode.
  - Communities will be forced to close their schools.
  - Our neighbors who have devoted their lives to public services may lose their jobs, their income, and their homes.
  - Our parents and grandparents will be denied access to long term care.

### **3. Action is needed NOW:**

- Stop digging: schools and other governmental services need more revenue, not more tax cuts or budget cuts. The Dept of Revenue reports that tax exemptions from 1995-2010 have cut more than \$9.6 billion in cumulative lost revenue. The lost amount for 2010 is over \$869 million.
- Craft a bipartisan solution that restores funding – the Governor's proposals and KACIR proposals are both important options to consider
- Freeze and roll back tax breaks. To start, KACIR, a council the legislature created, recommends \$207.84 mill in sales tax exemptions be discontinued. The state should stop phasing in additional tax exemptions (franchise tax, for ex).
- Study the tax system to implement long-range improvements to meet the state's needs. Our members and the community need to be educated and engaged as change is considered.

**Please utilize the Tips for Effective Advocacy (part of the ABC's document)  
as you compose your note/letter.**



# Advocating for Quality Public Schools: An Activity

Contacting legislators in Topeka and at home is crucial to successful advocacy on behalf of the interests of our members and our schools. KNEA has joined with a major coalition of concerned citizens: Kansans for Quality Communities. Three key points (in bold on side 2) undergird the KQC message and KNEA's plan to advocate for our schools and our communities.

Many of you have already written friendly legislators about KPERS and your efforts have been noted/remarked upon by those legislators. Now is the time to turn our attention to the issue of school funding (while keeping an ever watchful eye on KPERS issues.)

Today, as a part of our Sectional Assemblies we (Blake, Karen, Mark, and the KNEA Board) are engaging delegates in the following activity:

1. *Utilizing the talking points provided, write a card to one (or more) legislator(s). These will be collected today and mailed on your behalf.*
2. *Take home "Support Our Schools/Communities" information and find at least five people from your building to write to their legislator within 3 days. Each delegate should utilize the roster of legislator names & addresses (or the web site), talking points, and more postcards to get additional colleagues to participate in this project. Please collect any cards written and mail them.*
3. *Subscribe to Under the Dome (UTD), KNEA's almost-daily legislative update. Share UTD with others in your district. (Go to [KNEA.org](http://KNEA.org) to subscribe.)*
4. *Take quick action when you receive UTD Alerts requests for legislative contact. For each Alert, find 5 other members to respond.*
5. *Watch for information about a special campaign in coming weeks that will be targeted to engage broader community action and support – materials may be available by the time some UDRA's are held.)*

Thank you for doing your part today AND throughout the remainder of the legislative session!

## Supplemental information to the Talking Points

### Frequently asked questions:

- Does spending really matter for achievement? Yes—the Legislative Post Audit (LPA) found a 1:1 ratio between increased spending and student achievement (1% increase = 1% school improvement)
- Wouldn't we save by consolidating? Consolidating saves mostly by closing schools—is that the answer? We already have 13 fewer districts than in 1980. Many consolidate purchasing and services already.
- Have schools really cut as far as they can? When schools are turning off their heat at 2 pm, reducing custodians' time by 25%, it appears so.
- If schools can make it now, why can't they next year? Some aren't making it this year, others used emergency temporary measures, e.g. delaying purchases, spending contingency. Those strategies won't last long.
- What is KACIR? Kansas Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations was established by the legislature to study government functions.

