



Testimony before the
Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
on
**SCR 1602 - Constitutional amendment to prescribe revenue,
expenditure and taxation limitations on state government**

by

Mark Tallman, Associate Executive Director for Advocacy

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Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today as an opponent of **SCR 1602** on behalf of the Kansas Association of School Boards.

We would like to focus our remarks on the concept that state spending should be limited to the rate of population growth and inflation. That might be appropriate if the expectations of government services did not change. In the case of education, this is certainly not true and never has been. It is unrealistic to expect a function of state government – and education is the major constitutional function of state government – to continually expand and improve and yet not cost more. Remember, the rate of inflation is essentially the change in the cost of getting the same goods or services.

If this limitation had been in place for K-12 education over the past 40 years, funding would be less than half what it is today. We have reasonably accurate records of school district spending going back to 1975. Since 1975, the Kansas population has increased from around 2.3 million to over 2.9 million people, or 27.8 percent and the consumer price index has increased from 53.8 to 237.0, or 340.5 percent. If school funding had been limited to population growth plus inflation, the allowable increase would be 368.3 percent during the 40 years between 1975 and 2015.

In 1975, total Kansas school expenditures from federal reports were \$675 million, and general budget budgets from Kansas State Department of Education reports were \$489 million. In 2015, total expenditures were over \$6 billion and general fund, local option budget and special education state aid were \$4.1 billion, an increase of 800 percent and 832 percent respectively.

School funding was increased to improve educational services for students. Here are some examples:

- Students are in school longer. We've moved from voluntary half-day kindergarten to almost universal all-day kindergarten. We've added preschool. Fewer students drop out of high school and more students graduate. Districts offer more summer school, after school and weekend programs; and more drop-out recovery programs after age 18. Students take more classes and graduate with more credits. All of these changes require more staff.

- Special education began in the 1970s and the scope of programs was limited. More children with extraordinarily special needs and high costs, including one-to-one care, now survive to school age. Parents, advocates and legislators demand better, more intensive programs in areas like autism. These add to the numbers of teachers and staff.
- Schools are expected to provide more services. Meals used to be limited to lunch; now most schools are required by state law to provide breakfast. Changing housing patterns mean fewer children can safely walk to school. Extracurricular programs and facilities expanded because of Title IX requirements for girls. All these changes require more spending on food and cooks, buses and drivers, coaches and custodians.
- Even without more staff, salaries and benefits generally rise more than inflation. In addition, the Kansas teaching force is better educated, with more advanced degrees, than in the past.
- School buildings are larger, providing more specialized programs and areas, and are equipped with much more technology. Think of the change from a single “typing” room when I was in high school to a tablet/computer for every child in many 21st century schools.

These changes have produced higher outcomes. More students now graduate from high school, enter college and complete postsecondary degrees than ever before.

If school spending had been limited to inflation, Kansas would have the lowest school funding in the nation. If total school spending had been limited to inflation plus population growth, per pupil spending would have been less than \$4,700 in 2015, compared to an actual \$11,700 on headcount basis, and Kansas would have been \$2,700 below than the lowest spending state, instead of ranking 29th. If general fund, LOB and special education funding had been limited to inflation plus population growth, per pupil spending would have been \$3,395, compared to \$8,346.

As we have shared with this committee, the lowest spending states all have lower student achievement than Kansas, and the lowest achieving states all spend less than Kansas. Because state government is the major source of school revenue, and school funding is largest expenditure of the state, limiting state revenues and expenditures to inflation and population growth as proposed in SCR 1602 would make it almost impossible to compete with other states investing in better education results.

While funding for education has consistently increased more than inflation and population growth, it has NOT increased more than Kansas personal income. In 1975, total expenditures were 4.65 percent of personal income, and in 2015 were 4.43 percent. General fund budgets were 3.37 percent of KPI in 1975 and 3.00 percent in 2015.

Improving educational attainment boosts state personal income because individuals with higher educational levels earn more. KASB estimates educational improvements since 1990 have added about \$5.5 billion in Kansas earnings.

Thank you for your consideration.

