



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Kansans launch statewide effort to stabilize state budget, protect fair funding for essential services**

Kansas agricultural and business leaders launched efforts this week to help stabilize the state budget and protect fair funding for essential services. The not-for-profit Kansas Coalition for Fair Funding supports passage of a constitutional amendment in order to resolve the state's ongoing battle over education funding. The amendment would give Kansans the option to clarify ambiguities in the Kansas Constitution regarding suitable provisions for K-12 education.

### **Members of the Coalition include:**

- Kansas Contractors Association
- Kansas Farm Bureau
- Kansas Chamber of Commerce
- Kansas Livestock Association
- PMCA (Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association)
- American Warrior

The Coalition is led by Michael White, Kansas Contractors Association; Alan Cobb, Kansas Chamber; H.J. Swender, Jr., American Warrior; and Terry Holdren, Kansas Farm Bureau.

“As business and community leaders, we know that it sometimes takes tough conversations in order to find common ground and resolve differences,” said Swender, Jr. “We need to take politics out of this battle, and let the people of Kansas have the conversation to decide how they want to see this issue resolved. A

constitutional amendment remains the best way to make sure our schools and other essential services are not neglected.”

The Coalition strongly supports education as well as the other essential services that drive our economy and protect our communities, such as transportation, agriculture programs, job training, mental health services, and law enforcement.

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“Right now, more than half of every taxpayer dollar goes to K-12 schools and we believe strongly in maintaining that standard,” said White. “Education is – and should be – a top priority in the state budget. But, Kansans have other priorities too – like jobs, roads and the economy.”

Last week, the Coalition introduced House Concurrent Resolution 5209 to clarify the ambiguity that has been the basis of school funding lawsuits in Kansas for more than 30 years. HCR 5209 is intended to articulate that:

1. It is the duty of the Kansas Legislature to determine adequate funding for education just as it retains the duty to do so with funding for all other state services; and
2. It is the duty of the Kansas Judiciary to determine whether funding is being distributed equitably among school districts so that rural and urban schools, as well as economically-challenged schools in the state, remain constitutionally protected.

Currently, 53 percent – or \$3.4 Billion – of state taxpayer dollars are dedicated to K-12 schools. The latest ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court demands a nearly 20% increase in school funding but pales in comparison to a recent study which went as far as demanding up to \$6.7 Billion for K-12 schools, an amount equivalent to the entire state budget.

“That level of increase would require the state to double property taxes, cut funding for all other services, or increase income taxes by another \$2 Billion – none of which are viable solutions for Kansans,” said Coalition member Alan Cobb. “Because we are in a constant struggle over how much we are spending on K12, and this conflict is manifested primarily in litigation, we do not have the substantive conversations that we should about the effectiveness and efficacy of our education systems and how we properly prepare Kansas students for their lives after high school.”

The Coalition believes the proposed constitutional amendment will lift the shadow over the state’s ability to regain economic stability and begin to move Kansas forward.

For the latest information about the Coalition, visit [twitter.com/KSCoalition4FF](https://twitter.com/KSCoalition4FF).

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