

School boards happy with ruling

By VERONICA MONIER
Kansas school boards are not exactly upset that the state Supreme Court has ruled that the state isn't putting enough money into education.

Bill Curtis, associate executive director of the Kansas Association of School Boards, said at a special meeting last Monday night in Norton that the state Supreme Court's decision validates what the association has been saying all along on school finance.

He said the Montoy vs. State of Kansas decision, in a suit filed by several larger school districts against the state, so far is a short one. A long decision will not be released until after April 13, giving the Legislature time to change the law.

"We'll know on April 13 just how serious the Legislature is about this," he said.

Mr. Curtis said the decision will remain with the Supreme Court and can't be appealed, because the court hasn't closed out the case yet. He said their decision was "per curiam," which means that it was a decision of the entire court, rather than the individual members.

He said the Supreme Court agreed with a District Court decision that the Legislature failed to meet its obligation to suitably finance education.

Mr. Curtis said the high court had ruled in 1992 that school finance law was constitutionally suitable, but the law has changed since then and so has Kansas.

"The issue of suitability is not stagnant," he said, "but requires constant monitoring."

That is what makes the present finance law unconstitutional, he added.

"Achievement and student progress has been a part of our finance law since 1992," he said. "Those are part of the basis for No Child Left Behind. We've been doing it since '92. Suitability cannot be just a list of classes. Not if we are going to maintain Kansas' high education standards."

He said in 2001, the Legislature hired Augenblick and Myers, a consulting firm, to do a study on what a suitable education would cost. When the Legislature didn't like the figure the firm came up with, he said, they shelved the problem.

The district court decision, which was upheld by the Supreme Court, found a lot of changes since 1992 that affected school funding, he said.

Changes fall into two categories — social and legal. Socially, he said more students today live in poverty and more have limited English pro-

ficiency, there has been a dramatic increase in immigrants and state universities are using more rigorous admissions standards.

He said on the legal side, education goals and the state oversight committee have been removed. There have been changes in enrollment and at-risk weighting. Reductions in taxes have reduced revenue. New facilities and ancillary weighting have been added. Money to pay for special education has been added to local option budgets while state aid has been reduced to 85 percent and the limits on capital outlay have been removed.

Most of all, the Legislature cut state taxes and schools have been forced to raise local taxes.

"Now there are too many school districts relying on local option budgets to pay for general education, rather than using the money for extra expenses, as was intended," he said. "The state also continues to fund special education at less than 100 percent."

Mr. Curtis said the district court found the 1992 law to be unconstitutional and ruled that the current funding formula didn't meet the legislation's own definition of suitable education. The Supreme Court agreed.

"It's the state's responsibility to fund suitable education," he said. "Now, they have to find out how much it's going to cost and then pay it."

He said the weighting factors used to figure a district's budget were all found by the Supreme Court to be constitutional, and now educators will have to show what the costs are.

He said it was figured that the state would have to provide \$853 million to finance education, which is \$263 million more than it gives now.

"Local option budget is not to be used to finance general education," he said. "This is not going to be dollars raised in Norton County, but dollars raised statewide is what I think the Supreme Court is saying."

Mr. Curtis said he didn't think enrollment weighting would be taken out of school finance, but schools will have to prove the costs.

He said the Supreme Court is aware that the decision raises questions about continuing the present financing formula until fixed.

"If the Legislature doesn't do anything at all, will schools be shut down?," he said. "I don't know."

"What I do know is that now is the time that everybody needs to work together. Rural legislators need to help urban legislators and they, in turn, need to help their rural counterparts."



FLAMES LICKED through the roof of a house in Norcatour last Tuesday night as volunteer firemen cut through the shingles to get at the blaze. The house, the home of Randall

and Kim Mayo, 503 E. Opelik, suffered smoke and water damage, but the couple said they will rebuild.

— Herald photo by Carolyn Plotts

Fire wakes volunteers from their sleep

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

Norcatour city firemen were roused from their beds about 11 p.m. last Tuesday by the town's siren. The home of Randall and Kim Mayo on the east edge of town was on fire.

Mr. Mayo said he had just stepped into the kitchen of his home at 503 East Opelik when he heard a "pop" and a "crack". He said he saw fire in the ceiling where he and his wife have been remodeling. The Mayos heat with two wood stoves, and the

stove on the south end of the house later was determined to be the cause of the blaze.

Since the Mayos do not have a telephone, Mrs. Mayo said, she walked three blocks to the home of her mother-in-law, Jeannie Pelkey, to get help and she dialed 911.

The call came into Decatur County dispatch at 11:03 p.m. and firemen arrived on the scene at 11:08.

"We had about 10 volunteers respond to the siren with trucks from

both the rural and city fire departments," said Norcatour Fire Chief C.W. Lyon. "We had to cut a hole in the roof to ventilate it and to get to the fire. It's just one of those things we have to do."

Mr. Lyon estimated several thousand dollars worth of damage was done by the fire, which took his department about 45 minutes to extinguish.

On Wednesday, Mrs. Pelkey said the entire family had been at the house cleaning up. She said she was

surprised there was no more smoke damage. Most of the mess was from water damage.

"They are going to need a new roof on at least half of it," Mrs. Pelkey said, "but they didn't have any insurance, so we'll just have to see. For right now, they are going to block off the kitchen and just live in the rest of the house. We're thankful there weren't any injuries."

"Randy and Kim think they are lucky not to have lost more than they did."

Conference topics will center around farming

The Cover Your Acres winter ag conference will be held Thursday, Feb. 3, at The Gateway, sponsored by Kansas State University and Northwest Kansas Crop Residue Alliance.

Industry sponsors include South-

west Implement, Hoxie Implement, RedBall with Colby Implement, DuPont Ag with Pioneer Hybrids, and the High Plains Sunflower Committee.

Since early registration was closed last week, the price is now

\$25 per person. The fee includes all of the meetings, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Among topics that will be discussed will be corn versus milo production, no-till crop production, dryland soybean production, tree

loss in windbreaks and more.

All checks should be payable to Kansas State University and mailed to the Northwest Area Extension Office, Attn: Brian Olson, Box 786 Colby, Kan. 67701.

Business alliance needs a chairman for 2005

The Oberlin Business Alliance is looking for a volunteer to lead the organization for 2005.

The group met Wednesday, Jan. 12, at the LandMark Inn with about 16 members, but there were no volunteers to be chairman. Judy Scott of Sappa Valley Youth Ranch ran the meeting, but said she only wanted to do it that one time.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Gateway, said a lot of people who support the business al-

liance aren't downtown.

She said she thought the chairman should be someone who is downtown.

The discussion will continue at the February meeting.

Ms. Grafel suggested the group ask the antique stores to join. She

said maybe they could offer one fee for the Antique Guild to join. The group talked with Gary Anderson, owner of the LandMark Inn and a member of the guild, about the group joining the alliance. He said he would talk to the members at their next meeting.

Ms. Grafel said maybe the alliance could invite some of the guild members to the February meeting.

Alliance members talked about the holiday giveaway.

The "second chance" drawing was popular, though Gary Bruggeman was the only winner.



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MACHINERY AUCTION

Sat., Feb. 12, 2005 • 11:00 AM

LOCATION: 11 1/2 miles south of Cambridge, Nebraska on Highway 47 and 1/2 mile east OR 1/2 north of Highway 89-47 junction and 1/2 mile east. Lunch will be served.


SELLERS: Manuel and Margalee Ruf

AUCTIONEER'S NOTE: Manuel and Margalee are retiring from farming and feeding cattle and are offering a nice line of equipment that has been well-cared for, and most of which has been shedded. There are very few small items, so be on time!


TRUCKS AND CAR



1976 Chevy C65, tandem, elec. tag axle, 20' box w/hoist, 62" sides, 5x2 speed, 34,000 miles



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1949 Pontiac Silverstreak, 2-dr., runs and always shedded, ready to be restored. Motor has been over-hauled.

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Case 20' flopper chopper
Sunflower 27' field cultivator, Model #523127, SN: 5290071
Sunflower 21' chisel plow, Model #B21 SN: 75290
Springtooth, 24'
John Deere 400, 21' rotary hoe
John Deere 88, 6-row x 36" cultivator, SN: N00885X002014
Hickner 6-row x 36" cultivator
Flex-King 4x5 sweep plow w/NH3 and harrows

HAY EQUIPMENT

New Holland side delivery rake



John Deere 1380 14' swather, SN: 561687

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