

# Voters help legislators do their job in Topeka

I would like to thank Patty Wolters of Atwood for her testimony in defense of low-enrollment weighting for rural schools.

She did an excellent job, just what we need from constituents. It is a big commitment of time and money to travel to Topeka and put a "personal face" to the changes the Legislature is proposing. Patty gave a great presentation to both the House and Senate Education committees.

As far as changes that will affect our schools, I don't think we will see a cut in our budgets unless a school has declining enrollment, which covers most in my district. I have tried to tell both teachers and superintendents that we were at risk for losing low-enrollment weighting for several years. This goes back to the original report from the Augenblick and Meyers firm.

While I tried to be truthful about the repercussions of this report, both the Kansas-National Education Association and Kansas Association of School Boards jumped on board for a mandate to implement it.

The cry became, "Give us the money," it's the Legislature's study. Little did anyone dream that it would mandate that most of the money be given to large city districts with lots of at-risk students. To help you understand the "math" of this change, for every six dollars that went just to Blue Valley in the Kansas City area, a mere one dollar was given to all our small districts.

During the special session last year, it was the same old thing, with all the school lobbyists advocating the maximum dollars in all the formulas the legislature was looking at. In the final version, a committee, top-heavy with large district members, was able to put in a provision that changed the correlation weight-



## Letter from Topeka

By State Rep. John Faber  
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ing in strong favor of — you guessed it — the large school districts. This was a permanent change that we will have to live with for a long time. The package I voted for would have sent many more dollars "back home" and cost a lot less at the state level than what was passed.

This week, we are looking at a proposal that would allow any local entity to form a charter school. If the school board turned down the proposal, the sponsor would be allowed to appeal to the state Board of Education. If all the elements for a charter school were present, then the decision could be overturned and the charter granted. I don't think this would have much of an impact on our small rural schools, but from the testimony it would allow large districts more leeway in educating their

large numbers of at-risk students and with fewer dollars.

We have to consider whether this could present a solution to the large amounts of money that will be siphoned away from the low-enrollment schools. Again, here is a possible solution that could get us away from spending \$1 billion extra on mostly large districts that the Kansas-National Education Association and the Kansas Association of School Boards will oppose without taking the long view. The cry will once again be "Just give us the money."

To comment about this or other issues, I can be reached at jfaber@ink.org, call (785) 296-7500 or write to Rep. John Faber, State Capitol Room 513A-S, Topeka Kan. 66612.

## Write

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