

# 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, 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.**