



# United Voice

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## The 2011 UTW Friends of Education Award

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## *From the desk of the UTW President ...*

Earlier this year, all UTW members should have received official notice that in March we will be holding elections for all officers and ten executive board members. This is a reminder that nominations for these offices will take place at the January 23rd and February 13th Pro Rep meetings. Nominations will also be accepted by petition. Simply gather 25 signatures from UTW members and submit it to the UTW office by 4:45 pm, Thursday, February 9, 2012. The election will take place March 12-16.



I hope that many of you will consider being a candidate and take another step on the ladder of participation. UTW is a great organization and needs strong, dedicated leaders to keep it great and moving forward. That leader could be you! As in all organizations, leadership roles do take some time from your already busy schedule, but as in all organizations, if time is not given the organization fails to grow or work for its members. So, give it some thought. UTW needs your fresh ideas and skills. ❁ ❁ ❁

As the first semester comes to an end, I want to 'personally thank' each of you for your hard work and dedication to the students of our district. You have put in endless hours, many beyond the regular workday, to prepare your classroom, create appropriate lessons, grade and record assignments, assess and monitor student growth, attend PD, and accomplish the myriad of other duties required of you. For this you are greatly appreciated! Thanks are not enough for all the work you do for your chosen profession and the students entrusted to you, but since I haven't won the lottery, it is all I have to offer! I am honored to represent you. ❁ ❁ ❁

If I was going to be politically correct, I would wish you all a 'culturally appropriate seasonal ritual', but I'm not. I am simply wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy, Headache free New Year! Take time during the break to enjoy friends and family. Get some much deserved rest, and rejuvenate yourself for the second half. Enjoy! Enjoy! Enjoy!



## UTW is proud to announce the recipients for The 2011 UTW Friend of Education Award:

*Senator Jean Schodorf, Senator Carolyn McGinn,  
and Representative JoAnn Pottorff.*

UTW applauds the efforts of these Wichita area Republican legislators for their hardwork and dedication to the education of the students of Wichita Public Schools. It is encouraging to see these politicians in Kansas willing to go the extra mile to do what is right for public education. Students cannot speak for themselves in our political system. Senators Schodorf and McGinn and Representative Pottorff are to be commended for their pro-education stances when many of their Republican colleagues seem to be going out of their way to harm public education. Senator Schodorf is also a Speech Therapist in USD 259 and a member of UTW!



*Senator Jean Schodorf and Representative JoAnn Pottorff read their Friend of Education Awards presented by UTW President Larry Landwehr. Also receiving the award was Senator Carolyn McGinn. Sen. McGinn was unable to attend the meeting due to a committee meeting in Topeka.*

# Brownback's School Finance Plan Gives The Term "Bleeding Kansas" New Meaning

*KNEA Vice President Karen Godfrey*

Governor Sam Brownback's school finance plan gives the term 'bleeding Kansas' a new meaning. To put it in school terms: The Brownback plan does not meet standards. Brownback's claim that our schools will be 'held harmless' is deceptive because the harm has already occurred. Brownback is institutionalizing the massive cuts our schools have experienced, thus keeping our funding at this level of harm. KNEA teachers want to undo the harm.

Under the Brownback plan, school funding will be permanently locked in at an inadequately low level despite increasing state revenue. There will be no adjustments for increases due to inflation. If there's any change in a school's demographics, Brownback is saying: too bad. As educators, we know that one size does not fit all. It doesn't cost the same to educate every child, but every child needs to be educated.

While his plan does not include new cuts, schools can bleed to death as inflation eats up funding or raise local property taxes just to stay alive. For our students and teachers, this means no relief to the overcrowded classrooms, the lack of school supplies and support staff. It means a continuation of stressful worry about the capacity to meet students' needs.

Financially, KNEA's vision is a balanced approach to taxation that is equitable across income levels and across the state. No students should face a shortage of opportunities based on wealth or zip code. A comprehensive, high-quality education for every Kansan is the responsibility of the state.

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# King's KPERS Coal for Christmas!

“We were told to come up with a plan that makes KPERS sustainable and what little we’ve suggested doesn’t make it sustainable. It will cost more than our current law, not reduce the unfunded liability.” The above statement by Senator Laura Kelly sums up the recommendation of the KPERS Study Commission which was stacked with anti-public employee ideologues.

Kelly and other dissenting members of the Commission will file a minority report pointing out that the Commission chose to ignore the problem of the unfunded liability in favor of stripping public employees of a stable retirement system.

The Commission’s decision was not unexpected. After all, when the group was stacked with “financial planners” who stand to benefit personally by the elimination of KPERS as it is today, what choice did they have? Here’s what the Commission voted to do: No new KPERS member will have a defined benefit retirement system. These new employees will pay 6% of salary into a 401k program (the kind of retirement system that collapsed by 40% or more in 2008). The state will contribute 0.5% as a “match.” For each year worked they will increase the match another 0.5% for 10 years. So by one’s 11th year of employment, the state will be contributing 5% of salary. This total contribution of 11% after 10 years is significantly less than the 14% contributed every year to the Regent’s system employees.

For non-vested KPERS active members (all of you with less than 5 years of experience), they are stripping you of the benefit you have been paying into for those years. You will get the same 401k plan as new employees. For current active KPERS members who are already vested in the system (five years of experience or more), there is no change except that with the move to put all non-vested members and new members in a defined contribution system, funding of the current defined benefit system will decline making it difficult to meet long term obligations.

In other words, the further one is from retirement, the more likely it is that there will not be enough funding to meet your earned benefit. If you trust the legislature which has rarely met their KPERS obligation to change their behavior in the future, then you won’t worry. If you believe the legislature will continue to underfund their obligation, then you should worry. Then, in a transparent attempt to make themselves look responsible, the Commission voted unanimously to eliminate the super-funded golden parachute retirement system that the legislature gave itself years ago. But not for current legislators – for future legislators.

Legislators like Senator Jeff King, who made the motion to strip teachers and other public employees of a fair retirement system in favor of a woefully underfunded savings account, will see their own golden parachute KPERS plan protected. We will be calling for your help on actions to take after the holidays as the legislature prepares to return to Topeka. Watch your inbox and [www.knea.org](http://www.knea.org) for more information. To keep abreast on the latest KPERS issues, visit [www.keepingthekansaspromise.com](http://www.keepingthekansaspromise.com).

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## **Kim Morrissey and Dodge Elementary Win 2012 NEA Foundation/ California Casualty Teaching Excellence Award**

Kim Morrissey, Dodge Literacy Elementary Magnet, Health and PE teacher, and Dodge Principal Janet Jump received a \$650 check for Dodge from the NEA Foundation and California Casualty for being a 2012 winner of the Excellence in teaching Award. Kim also received the district-level elementary nomination for State Teacher of the Year for 2011. Ms. Morrissey is an extremely creative teacher, including the use of an alter-ego, “Professor B. Healthy.” The check was awarded at the UTW December Pro Rep meeting.

Congratulations to UTW member, Kim Morrissey!





*Diane Gjerstad - USD 259 Gov. Relations, Sen. Jean Schodorf, and Rep. JoAnn Pottorff talk before the Dec. Pro Rep meeting and Friend of Education Award presentation.*

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