

Kansas State Board of Education Fails to Adopt Governor's School Finance Plan

Bi-partisan discomfort with Gov. Sam Brownback's school finance plan emerged Wednesday among members of the State Board of Education.

Education Board member Ken Willard, a Republican from Hutchinson, who has voiced support of Brownback's school funding proposal, pushed for approval of a motion that applauded the governor's efforts.

Willard's motion received support from five Republicans on the board, but two Democrats opposed it and two Republicans and one Democrat abstained from voting. That killed the motion, leaving it one vote short of the six votes required for approval on the 10-member board.

Willard's motion read: "Be it moved that the State Board of Education approves the efforts of the governor's office to craft a new school finance formula based upon input from a broad spectrum of Kansas business and education leaders."

Willard described his motion as a non-political expression of appreciation for Brownback, a Republican, for keeping the board in the loop on his school finance plan. John Bacon, a Republican from Olathe, supported Willard's motion, saying, "I don't understand why people would want to snub their nose at the governor."

Jana Shaver, a Republican from Independence, said she disagreed with the part of Brownback's school finance plan that moves some responsibility for funding schools from the state to the local level.

"I cannot support an effort to push funding to the local level," she said.

Sally Cauble, a Republican from Liberal, said she was unsure whether the state needed a new school finance formula.

Janet Waugh, a Democrat from Kansas City, said Brownback's plan would have a negative impact on some of her school districts.

Carolyn Campbell, a Democrat from Topeka, wanted the board to delay a vote on Willard's proposal until the board could hear from Democrats who unveiled an alternative proposal on Tuesday. But that was shot down.

Voting for Willard's motion were Willard, Bacon, Walt Chappell of Wichita, Kathy Martin of Clay Center and David Dennis of Wichita, all Republicans. Voting against were Campbell and Waugh. Abstaining were Cauble, Shaver and Democrat Sue Storm of Overland Park.

The board later unanimously approved expressing appreciation for Brownback's new career and technical education initiative.