Lee’s Summit R-7 School District Feb. 28, 2013
Citizens’ Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Legislative Forum

ATTACHMENT: R-7 Toolkit for Advocacy
NOTE: Minutes are also being sent to Business Roundtable members.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

- TENTATIVE: We are working with our state legislators to finalize a legislative trip to Jefferson City on either April 8 or 15. Legislators' schedules will be more final by early March, and we'll get back to you as soon as possible after they confirm.

CAC Talking Points from Feb. 28 Meeting

- Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) members hosted a legislative forum with members of the Business Roundtable (BRt) and Board of Education also invited to participate.
- Around 30 CAC, BRt and Board of Education members attended as well as four guests.
- Topics discussed included teacher retirement system, tax-credit reform, governor's extended school-year proposal, early childhood funding, services for children with disabilities, school choice, vouchers, voucher-type (scholarship) programs, merit pay, teacher evaluation based on testing, local control of school districts, tax reduction efforts in Kansas, voting records and how CAC and BRt can help legislators protect education funding.

Opening / Welcome / Members Attending
Meeting opened at 6:35 p.m. CAC Chairperson Kent Kirby began the meeting and welcomes all attending. The legislators attending were introduced and provided a brief introduction. CAC members attending included Chairperson Kent Kirby (also BRt), Assistant Chairperson Janis Duke, Elaine Bluml, Dave Boulden, Jon Ellis (also BRt), Dr. Roger Fender, Jacque Gragg, Hilary Graves, Libia Kozisek, Dr. Tom Kurucz (also BRt), Manne Magady, Dr. David McGehee (also BRt), Judy Noland, Janice Phelan (also BRt), Michael Shaw, Dennis Smith, Dorothy Walk, Bob White and Sherri Wood-Powe. In addition to the five CAC members who serve on both groups, other BRt members attending were Mike Allen, David Gale, Bob Glaser, Rob Lund, Laura Maxwell, Chip Moxley, Kim Ryan and Ron Williams. Board of Education members attending included Ron Baker, Terri Harmon (who also serves on CAC) and Jack Wiley. Four guests were in attendance, including a reporter from the Lee's Summit Journal who stayed for a few minutes.

R-7 Platform and Voting Records
Dr. McGehee presented the R-7 Platform (see attachment) and discussed the district's efforts to track voting records in the Missouri General Assembly.

Questions and Answers
Each legislator presented a brief introduction, mentioning topics such as the challenge of meeting the requirements of Obamacare, rising cost of health and human services, reforming Medicaid, tax credit reform to create a more fair system and provide needed state revenue, legislation to allow school districts
to hire their own police officers, a prevailing wage bill for schools, the "Report Card Bill" and pending unaccredited school district legislation.

Kent Kirby facilitated a question-and-answer session with CAC, BRt and Board of Education asking questions, including:

1. **Teacher retirement system:** CAC member Judy Noland asked why the General Assembly appears to want to make potentially harmful changes to the state's teacher retirement system. All legislators agreed that there is nothing specific going on with General Assembly bills that would impact the system and that they are not anticipating changes this year.

2. **Tax credit reform:** CAC Chairperson Kent Kirby asked legislators to explain major provisions of efforts to reform tax credits. Sen. Kraus reported that the Senate is working on legislation that would cap some areas and hopefully save the state from $40 to $60 million annually. Rep. Solon filed a bill Feb. 28 (House Joint Resolution 30) that would place Hancock-Amendment-type limits on tax credits. Rep. Grisamore added that some tax credits create jobs but others are "truly white-collar welfare" with no return on investment and mentioned two bills – House Bill 87 and Senate Bill 20 – which would benefit effective tax credits for organizations such as food pantries and programs for individuals with developmental disabilities, women in crisis and vulnerable senior citizens.

3. **Extended school year:** R-7 Deputy Superintendent Dr. Tom Kurucz asked the legislators to share their opinion of the governor's recommendation to extend the school year by several days at a time when the education funding formula is funded at just 92 percent. Legislators reported that they do not believe any legislation has been submitted regarding this and that they do not see it happening.

4. **Early childhood funding:** Judy Noland, Hilary Graves and Bob White of the CAC urged the legislators to work to add more money for early childhood education (such as Parents As Teachers), including fully funding preschool for all Missouri children, which has at least seven-to-one return on investment. Legislators expressed support for this concept, adding that the governor has continued to take money from the successful Parents As Teachers program, emphasizing the success of Operation Breakthrough in urban areas and adding that higher-education "makes a lot of noise" and effectively puts pressure on the state for funding.

5. **Services for children with disabilities:** Libia Kozisek of the CAC asked about challenges families face when trying to work with the Missouri Regional Center for a child with disabilities. Rep. Grisamore asked her to contact his office for assistance, adding that the Regional Centers have been a challenge for families and are in need of major reform.

6. **School choice, vouchers and voucher-type programs, merit pay, teacher evaluation based on testing and local control:** Manne Magady of the CAC asked each legislator where he or she stands on issues promoted by special-interest groups promoting vouchers and voucher-type (scholarship) programs, merit pay for teachers, teacher evaluation based on student testing and teacher tenure laws, adding that legislators frequently emphasize support for local control and then appear to support legislation that removes this control from local districts. Rep. Cierpiot said he has supported legislation giving Kansas City Public Schools students the opportunity to transfer to accredited districts, that he believes House Bill 631 adds more steps to teacher tenure and seems reasonable and that he believes really good teachers should be paid more. He added that we must reassure citizens that legislation (such as school choice) designed to help the failing districts will not impact Lee's Summit R-7 and other successful districts. Rep. Solon added that she is concerned about open-enrollment legislation and sees this as a taxpayer issue, adding that she believes the Kansas City and St. Louis districts need help and that she favors scholarship programs allowing these urban district students to attend private schools. She added that she has problems with merit pay and that current tenure regulations put too much pressure on principals. Sen. Kraus added that his voting record is at least 95-percent in support of public schools' platforms, adding that we need to be open to solutions to help Kansas City and other failing
school districts. Rep. Grisamore said that legislators must choose their battles wisely in Jefferson City and that we may have to give some ground to be successful in important areas. He added that he has concerns about open enrollment and sees it as a tax and educational quality issue and also does not see it has the votes to pass in the General Assembly. Several legislators added that they did not see tuition tax credits or voucher-type programs designed to help failing urban districts sweeping the state.

7. **Competing with Kansas efforts to reduce income tax:** Dr. Roger Fender of the CAC asked legislators to share their opinion on if and how Missouri should compete with recent efforts by Kansas lawmakers to significantly reduce taxes in our neighboring state. Legislators said the General Assembly is working on a plan that would phase in some cuts without the drastic moves Kansas is making. Several expressed concerns about the Kansas efforts and believed we should take a wait-and-see approach to watch what happens in Kansas before cutting taxes too deeply in Missouri. Sen. Kraus said the Senate has a plan on the table that would pay for tax cuts with changes to the tax credit laws.

8. **Voting records and voucher-type legislation:** Terri Harmon of the CAC and Board of Education asked the legislators to discuss their opinion on voucher-type legislation. The lawmakers seemed to agree that they do not see this legislation passing with Sen. Kraus and Rep. Grisamore adding that their voting records show they are against this.

9. **How can CAC and BRt help protect funding for education:** CAC Assistant Chairperson Janis Duke asked the lawmakers to share how the CAC and BRt can serve as advocates for schools and help protect funding for education. Rep. Cierpiot said the groups could share that we can't expand Medicaid without it taking over the entire state budget and reducing funds for education. Rep. Solon encouraged both groups to stay involved, visit Jefferson City, appreciate the legislators willing to give you their opinion since some are not willing to do so. Sen. Kraus said to be proactive about potentially changing the education funding formula and encouraged the groups to help spread the word about the damaging impact of expanding Medicaid through Obamacare. Rep. Grisamore encouraged the citizens to work with legislators on tax-credit reform, emphasizing that he does not want Missouri to go overboard with tax reductions like Kansas is doing. He also added that we need to transform the Medicaid system.

**Legislators' Wrap-Up**

During closing remarks, the four legislators expressed their thanks to the groups for hosting and attending the forum and emphasized the importance of working together. They also stated that bills filed in the House and Senate can change significantly through amendments.

**Closing**

Kent Kirby and Dr. David McGehee concluded the meeting and thanked all for attending. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

**Website Information**

Information about the R-7 School District's Legislative Platform is available at [http://www.lsr7.org/district/2012-legislative-platform/](http://www.lsr7.org/district/2012-legislative-platform/). This website also includes a Toolkit for Advocacy and contact information for all R-7 area legislators. The platform includes a variety of points, including fully funding the state's education Foundation Formula, providing avenues for new sources of revenue for public schools, opposing legislation that authorizes open enrollment and opposing legislation that diverts public school funding to voucher-type programs.

**Thank you for being a part of the Citizens' Advisory Committee!!**

Please visit the CAC website at: [http://www.lsr7.org/district/community/citizens-advisory-committee/](http://www.lsr7.org/district/community/citizens-advisory-committee/)