



NEWS RELEASE

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KEA president calls Governor Beshear's budget plan "the best he could do under the circumstances"

Kentucky Education Association President Sharron Oxendine tonight called Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear's proposed budget "the best he could do, given the condition of the state budget and the present dismal revenue forecast."

Oxendine praised Beshear for maintaining his commitment to P-12 schools, students and school employees and for proposing to increase slightly funding for SEEK in each of the two years of the biennium. But she cautioned the Governor and the General Assembly, "These small increases in the SEEK base—particularly coupled with a first-year reduction to non-SEEK school funding of two percent—will not be sufficient to move Kentucky schools forward and to keep Kentucky Learning."

"KEA urges members of the Kentucky General Assembly to maintain school funding, either by passing Governor Beshear's plan or creating one of their own that prioritizes education equally. KEA agrees with Governor Beshear that no other state function is more important than its investment in our children's future. Their future will determine the future of our state and whether we all thrive. "We are heartened that the Governor literally is willing to put his money where his mouth is," said Oxendine.

According to the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center, Kentucky children face more educational obstacles than children in all but three other states. The center's research also indicates that Kentuckians get better results than almost any other state for their investments in public schools. KEA believes that if the state's political Leaders do what is necessary to adequately fund our public schools, they will make it possible for Kentucky to make gains in educational achievement. These gains will translate to gains for the Commonwealth's economy, health and safety.

Oxendine singled out for special praise the Governor's proposal to have the state absorb an estimated seven percent increase in the cost of school employees' health insurance benefits, at a cost of approximately \$22 million over the biennium. "Teachers and classified staff design and deliver our children's education. If we do not



attend to their economic and professional needs, our public schools and students will suffer.”

Oxendine went on to say, “Of course, we are far from satisfied with this budget, as we have been with so many recent budgets, which have made no significant increases to school funding. KEA recognizes the difficult position the Governor is in, and we applaud him for having the courage to propose video Lottery terminals.”

“There are those in the Senate and House who will object to this proposal. To them we say, our children and our schools continue to have real unmet needs. If you don’t want the \$200 million the Governor estimates VLTs will produce, then show us your plan to raise that revenue. Or tell us why you are content to punish our students for your failure to act.”

KEA supports a comprehensive approach to revenue enhancement that will enable the state to sustain important government functions Like public schools through good times and bad. KEA supports a system that grows with the economy and supports legislative action to create such a system.

KEA represents more than 41,000 educators all across Kentucky, including active teachers and school classified employees, students studying to become teachers, and retired educators.