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Legislative News January 6, 2012

Redistricting and the Budget are topics of conversation

The two main topics of conversation at the Capitol this week were redistricting and the budget. The House and Senate continue to work out the details of redistricting. Governor Beshear has not yet offered his proposed budget; that will happen on Tuesday, January 17, 2012.

KEAT Press Conference

On Tuesday, January 4, 2012, the Kentucky Education Action Team ("KEAT") held a press conference at the capitol. KEA and other education interest groups are the members of KEAT. The sole focus of the coalition is to cooperatively lobby for adequate school funding. You can learn more about KEAT, see a copy of its press release and view graphs showing the consistent decline of school funding at www.kyeat.org.

State of the Commonwealth Address

Tuesday evening Governor Beshear gave his "State of the Commonwealth" address. His assessment was optimistic but blunt. As expected, the state budget outlook for the next two years is stark, and he warned that significant cuts in state services will be necessary in the short term. He did not offer any specifics about which parts of state government will suffer those cuts or how deep they will be.

On the positive side, the governor also believes that Kentucky is making progress in many areas that make the state an attractive place to do business, and believes the Commonwealth's economic future is bright. He did note that potential investors have concerns about the readiness of Kentucky's workforce. In order to address that issue immediately, Beshear proposed creating efficiencies in the career and technical education system by bringing it all under the purview of the Kentucky Department of Education, and he plans to actively pursue that change during this legislative session. Over the longer term, the governor believes requiring students to stay in high school through age 18 and supporting early childhood education are important steps toward creating a well-educated, ready work force. You can read the full text of the [governor's address here](#).

Blue Ribbon Commission on Tax Reform

One of the most effective ways to address Kentucky's revenue problem will be through tax reform. During his remarks to the Chamber of Commerce on Thursday evening, Beshear detailed his plan to establish the Blue Ribbon Commission on Tax Reform that will be charged with creating a plan that assures fairness, competitiveness, simplicity and compliance, elasticity and adequacy. A tax system that insures adequate revenue is of particular importance to public school educators, since funding for every aspect of public schools flows directly from that source. See a story about Beshear's plan at <http://migration.kentucky.gov/newsroom/governor/20120105taxreform.htm>

Charter Schools

Many of you may have seen the television ads promoting charter schools paid for by "KARE" (Kentuckians Advocating Reforms in Education). The ads are intended to support Representative Brad Montell's HB 77, which would establish charter schools in Kentucky. KEA does not support charter schools and will work to defeat this legislation. Among other things, KEA opposes charter schools because they divert funding from existing public schools. Giving more schools access to fewer public dollars simply does not make economic sense and cannot support Kentucky's enhanced expectations for every student. There are many other good and legitimate objections to charter schools. You can read a brief summary of some of [KEA's objections here](#). Please keep these points in mind as you talk with your legislators about this important issue.

Sincerely,

Sharron K. Oxendine

KEA President