

Kansas Education Liberty Act:

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Kansas Education Liberty Act (KELA)?

This act addresses one of the most daunting challenges confronting the citizens of Kansas: the education of our children. Our already overburdened education system is now facing additional trials due to ongoing state budget deficits. This bill employs a creative approach and turns to the people of Kansas to both help improve educational outcome and relieve the budget crises. The act attains these goals through increased parental and community involvement in education. This increased involvement is achieved by creating educational scholarships to empower parents to move their children to educational settings that meet their individual needs.

What does KELA do?

The Kansas Education Liberty Act (KELA) creates a vehicle to fund scholarships to Kansas students so they can attend qualified public and non-public schools of their parents' choice. These scholarships are funded by state tax credit eligible donations from both individual and corporate contributors throughout Kansas. Taxpayers are empowered to give these donations directly to independent not-for-profit Scholarship Granting Organizations that will in turn grant educational scholarships to eligible students. For every dollar that a taxpayer donates (within specific limitations) that taxpayer will receive a tax credit of one dollar to apply towards their Kansas Income Tax Liability.

How does this act reduce overall taxpayer spending on education in Kansas?

With legislative mandated limits on individual donations and individual scholarships, the total tax credits associated with this bill are less than what is currently spent by taxpayers in the Base State Aid Per Pupil (BSAPP) thus reducing spending from the state's general fund and reducing the budget shortfall.

How will this act improve educational outcomes?

With the implementation of KELA, all Kansas children will enjoy improved education outcomes in both public and private education. Students who are currently failing in public education will be empowered to find an educational setting that meets their learning style and personal interests. Pupils who are currently thriving in the public education system will find smaller classes and more resources per pupil to drive their success to even higher levels as other students choose a different educational environment.

How do we know KELA will work?

The Kansas Education Liberty Act (KELA) is not an untested approach. It borrows heavily from eighteen successful school choice programs already in place in ten states and the District of Columbia, serving over 171,000 American students.

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How does this bill affect public education?

This bill reduces three of the major problems facing public education. It decreases the number of students per classroom, it increases spending per pupil, and it increases parental involvement in education.

How does this bill increase community involvement in education?

By allowing Kansas taxpayers to become actively involved in Kansas education through direct funding we return a sense of educational ownership to all Kansans. This act allows taxpayers to contribute to independent scholarship granting organizations of their choice and makes those donations a direct tax credit towards their Kansas Income Tax liability. This will give all Kansans an active role in the education of our youth.

What about students facing challenges?

KELA borrows language from successful and court tested programs from around the nation to protect educational access for all Kansas children. For example, each Scholarship Granting Organization must award a percentage of their scholarships to low income students within the area they serve. That percentage varies by service area, and is defined by the percentage of pupils in the public schools that are eligible for free or reduced lunches. For special needs students, higher scholarship limits are allowed to ensure that these pupils have equal access to school choice without regard to the higher cost associated with their special needs.

Who decides who gets scholarships?

Ultimately, you do. Since all Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) are funded entirely through donations from Kansans, Kansans will decide which SGOs receive funding. If a SGO is not granting scholarships as we see fit, individual Kansans will simply choose to quit funding them. There are some provisions in the Act to make sure that SGOs are not discriminating or biased against low income pupils, but otherwise it is up to you and me to decide which SGOs we fund.

Who decides what schools students may attend?

The simple answer is parents or guardians. Specific Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) might choose to offer scholarships to a specific type school or only those in a specific geographical area, but students may apply to any SGO that offers scholarships to the school of their choice. We trust that if a school is offering a good product, their community will seek out a SGO to assure that potential students have access to potential scholarships.

For more information, to book a speaker on this topic, or to schedule a more in-depth interview, please feel free to contact:

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