

OTHER NEWS

Kansas State Board of Education votes to increase pay after being left behind by legislators

BY ANNA KAMINSKI  
Kansas Reflector

TOPEKA — Most members of the Kansas State Board of Education voted to increase their pay to equal state legislators, which was commonplace until legislators doubled their pay this year, leaving board members behind.

In a 9-1 vote on Tuesday, the board approved a request for around \$126,000 beginning July 1, 2026, to fund the salaries of the 10 board members and make them commensurate with legislator pay.

The last time the board received a raise was nearly two decades ago.

A handful of board members viewed the raises as the right thing to do for future generations. Others were emboldened by the principle of the matter, emphasizing the equivalence of their public service to that of state legislators.

Beryl New, a former Topeka public school administrator and educator, said it was

important to look beyond the current board members, many of whom said they didn't need the pay.

"There are other people who may come on and take my seat who need to know that whatever they're putting out is honored, appreciated and respected, just as a legislator is," she said.

The Legislature created a commission that approved raises for lawmakers in 2024. Those raises went into effect in January. The current average annual legislator salary is \$43,000, and lawmakers budgeted for an additional 4.4% increase next year. Before legislators raised their pay independently of the board, their salary rates were intertwined. They passed a law in April that permits the state board to set their compensation. It was attached to legislation requiring school districts to show videos in classes on human growth, development and sexuality that depict fetal development.

Board members



Michelle Dombrosky and Jim Porter, members of the Kansas State Board of Education, are shown at a July 8 meeting in Topeka. ANNA KAMINSKI/KANSAS REFLECTOR

currently make \$88.66 per day in addition to a subsistence allowance of \$166 daily. The \$126,000 members approved would bring them up to par with legislative pay, including the future 4.4% raise.

The Legislature's rationale for pay increases was rooted in its standing as a citizen legislature, said Frank Harwood, deputy education commissioner. Lawmakers argued in 2024 that higher pay would attract more people to the job.

"The question is, does that same logic apply to the state board?" he asked the board. It appeared it did.

could care about education but can't afford to sit in these seats," Arnold said.

The vote came at a time when the Kansas State Department of Education is reckoning with a smaller budget and higher costs. The budget crafted by the Legislature didn't leave the department any wiggle room, so board members approved a slate of requests for budget enhancements. One was so the department could continue to pay rent in the state building it leases for employees.

The U.S. Department of Education is also holding \$42.9 million of Kansas funds in limbo.

Debby Potter, a conservative board member from Great Plains, was the only member who voted against the raises. Earlier in the day's meeting, she also voted to cut funds for teacher professional development.

"If I'm willing to cut professional development, I am willing to cut this," she said.

Cathy Hopkins, board chair, said: "I am not."

Hopkins said she lobbied the Legislature this year for board raises to no avail. Her decision was based on principle, she said.

Melanie Haas, an executive from Overland Park, mentioned an old comment from Senate President Ty Masterson, an Andover Republican who in 2022 called the board "monolithic" as the Legislature was approving a redrawn state education district map that favored more conservative candidates, according to reporting from the Kansas City Star.

To Porter, it boils down to a matter of respect.

He said Masterson's 2022 comment was a direct insult to the board because it "didn't do what the Senate president wanted them to do."

The pay inequity is akin to disrespect toward the board and public education, Porter said.

"We need to be respected," he said.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE DISTRICT COURT  
OF FINNEY COUNTY,  
KANSAS

In the Matter of the Estate of  
LAWRENCE G. ROTH,  
deceased

**Case No. FI-2025-PR-000058**  
(Pursuant to K.S.A. Chapter 59)

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Judy Irsik, Petitioner

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COLLINS & RAMSEY LLP  
607 N. Seventh Street,  
P.O. Box 439  
Garden City, Kansas 67846  
Phone: (620) 276-3203  
Attorneys for Petitioner

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