

## State Budget Essay

James Farris, Lincoln High School

Think of the many successful people our nation has seen; Theodore Roosevelt, Bill Gates, Hillary Clinton, Michael Jordan or even Neil Armstrong just to name a few. Each one has changed the world in some significant way and none would be where they are today if it wasn't for one thing. It is the map that guides our young kids to fulfill their careers and dreams. It is one of the single most important things in our country today and for our future. It is education.

Although everyone in our government would love to put money into educational funds and see our schools thrive, the budget crunch makes this a really hard thing to do. In the State of Kansas, this past year, there is no question that our budget has taken a significant blow to that we have never seen before. Revenue in our state is down and this forces us to take money out of things that are very important and vital to our people. Spending has been cut, as have jobs, resources, and opportunities. This does not make a good formula for success and has to change.

In early February 2009, our state was expecting a BSAPP of \$4,433.00 per pupil. Plus a consumer price index adjustment that would bump that total up to \$4,597.00 per student. However, after takeouts such as the Recision, Mega, and Omnibus Bills, that total has dwindled down to just \$4,012.00. Our school alone in Lincoln, Kansas (USD 298) has lost more than 180 thousand dollars and those numbers might increase even more. "It is no question that our school is hurting right now and something has to be done," said USD 298 Superintendant Gary Nelson.

But just how do we do this? There are many ways our legislature could go about this, one is raising state taxes. Doing this would move Kansas from the 27<sup>th</sup> highest taxed state in the Nation all the way up to number nine, and would negatively affect low income families who

have problems supporting themselves. But if we do not raise taxes statewide then our local small town communities will suffer and have difficulty keeping businesses open. Another outlet is adding a tax to cigarettes and/or alcohol which would also put more money into our school funds.

If changes are not made and our schools have to begin the cutting process, what would they cut? Extracurricular activities are on top of this list along with school faculty and variety in classes available for each student. When asked about this Senator Jay Emler said, "I would first cut extracurricular activities, they are important, but do not educate a student as much as class work." Other things schools are looking into cutting is bus routes, technology, and class field trips.

It is understood that education occupies a significant chunk of our state's budget, and adding to it will take away from other things that are also very important to our states success as a whole. "Education is a huge part of the budget," says Senator Emler, "We need to support businesses that allow our smaller communities to thrive." One of the best ways to follow Emler's advice is to buy in state and not traveling across the border to purchase items. If Kansas goes through with a 1% sales tax increase, citizens that live on the states border, such as Kansas City residents, will just jump the line to the next state to purchase expensive thing such as automobiles. This cannot happen.

As you can see there is no easy way out of this hole we have dug. Although our government is trying many nifty ways to get us out of it, it is still going to be a long and difficult process. We as a state need to buckle down and try to remove this problem in any way we can before important things such as education get cut even more.

