



For Immediate Release: March 15, 2005

Voters Would Decide School Funding Under Plan Proposed by Sen. Coleman

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Missouri *voters* should decide how the state will fund public education under a resolution supported by the St. Louis Board of Education that was heard in the Senate Education Committee today.

SJR 15, sponsored by Sen. Maida Coleman (St. Louis), proposes possible funding mechanisms for fully funding any foundation formula approved by the General Assembly. Under the resolution, Missouri voters would then give final approval to the proposed funding sources.

“This would give the people of Missouri ownership of the public education system,” Sen. Coleman said. “The people will decide how much should be raised, how much should be spent and on what the resources should be spent.”

SJR 15 creates the “Education First Schools Funding Act” that would fund technology and infrastructure upgrades for local school districts. The proposal would also keep local property taxes lower while providing an influx of dollars to the schools and thousands of new jobs statewide because of expanded school construction.

Sen. Coleman said that because the state is being sued by school districts for inadequately funding the foundation formula, the Legislature will probably have to write a completely new formula. Under most projections, a new formula would cost the state an additional \$1 billion per year if funded properly for students to perform under the No Child Left Behind Act.

“We are not fully funding the current foundation formula, and no matter what new formula the General Assembly comes up with, we will have to provide adequate money to fund it. This proposal would allow Missouri voters to make that determination,” Sen. Coleman said.

(More)

Under SJR 15, Missourians would vote on whether to do the following:

- Increase state income tax by 1% that would generate about \$730 million per year or about \$900 per pupil per year; AND,
- Increase the statewide sales tax by ½-cent that would be used for technology and infrastructure in local school districts. Funding would be provided to districts on a matching grant basis, which would help keep property taxes lower.
 - Missouri is one of only 8 states that do not provide state funds for school infrastructure.

Sen. Coleman said that this proposal would give the citizens of Missouri an opportunity to determine the future of education in their local school districts.

“If they support this, every penny of the money raised would go to public education for school construction, better teacher salaries, smaller class sizes, remedial reading and after-school programs,” Coleman said.
