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## **Time to Drop the Lawsuits**

JEFFERSON CITY — This legislature works hard to fully fund our public schools. In fact, over the last three years, Missouri's public elementary and secondary education schools have received an increase in money of about half a billion dollars. It's money the districts need to give our children the kinds of advantages they will need when they further their educations and enter the workforce. Despite the increases, some districts are saying it's not enough. And they're spending YOUR tax dollars to try to get a judge to legislate an appropriation from the bench.

Recently, in a lawsuit that challenged the revised Foundation Formula used to distribute revenues to our schools, a judge in Jefferson City ruled that the legislature's method of dividing up revenues was equitable. Schools are getting money based on the number of students being taught with some cost-of-living adjustments for our biggest cities. Furthermore, the judge ruled we meet the state constitutional requirement of spending at least 25 percent of revenues on public education. In essence, he said the legislature has a formula that is adequate and equitable. End of story? You'd think so, but, no, more than 200 school districts across the state... with some of those in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senatorial District... have decided to keep suing, in effect, you, the taxpayer... using your money to continue the litigation.

Some districts, such as the Pike County R-III District in Clarksville, have decided the \$1,187 they already spent on lawyers trying to do the work we lawmakers are paid to do is enough. They are not going forward any further with this suit. However, too many other school districts want to appeal the recent decision even further. Ironically, they want to spend money to do this... money they claim they don't have to educate our children! According to the group Americans for Prosperity, four out of eleven local school districts in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senatorial District have spent \$92,346 on this litigation. The list goes on and on of districts wasting these tax dollars. Just think of how many classroom supplies could have been bought... how many teachers' raises could have been implemented... and how many more children could have been helped IF the money had gone to classrooms. A total of \$4.6 million of your tax dollars have been wasted thus far with more being spent every day.

I want to appeal to the parents, teachers, and administrators in the more than 200 school districts across the state which are continuing this foolish quest. The elected school boards of these districts should vote to drop this continued litigation and let the people who you have elected and entrusted do what they are constitutionally obligated to do: spend our education dollars in a way that is not only adequate and equitable but will give our kids the best chances at success in the future.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.