

# State Representative

# Don Hineman

**Don's Legislative Update**  
*December 30, 2013*

## The School Finance Dilemma

The 2014 Kansas Legislative session will begin in just two short weeks, on Monday, January 13. Most Statehouse observers expect that much of the 2014 session will revolve around the issue of school finance. The issue has come to the forefront due to a lawsuit that has been working its way through the courts. The suit was filed in 2010 by a coalition of students and school districts in Wichita, Hutchinson, Dodge City and Kansas City. They charged that the state of Kansas was inadequately funding its public schools as statutorily required by the school finance formula. A district court ruling on January 13, 2013 found that the state was in fact deficient in funding public schools and ordered substantial additional funding. The matter is now before the Kansas Supreme Court, and their ruling is expected shortly.

As I [pointed out](#) recently, that decision will trigger multiple discussions and impact a number of other issues. It has been said that public education is a key function of state government, just as national defense is a key function of the federal government. K-12 education consumes roughly half of the entire state general fund budget, and that is pretty good evidence that Kansas lawmakers recognize that responsibility. However appropriations in recent years have fallen short of the timetable agreed upon following an earlier school funding court suit in 2005, and that is what has triggered the current suit.

The Supreme Court decision is such a pivotal issue that no one can predict what will be the eventual outcome, either for funding or for education policy. My interest in this will be to insure that Kansas continues to live up to its responsibility to provide top-notch public education opportunities, but in a manner that is efficient and equitable. My House district contains all of ten school districts and parts of thirteen more. There is much at stake for these rural districts and for the students they serve.

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## Should Farmers Pay More Property Tax?

At least two Kansas legislators have asked that question in the press in recent months, and it has me quite concerned. Why has the question even come up? The possibility of losing the school funding lawsuit has many folks pondering how the state might pay the bill if the Supreme Court orders several hundred million dollars per year of additional funding for schools. And this comes at a time when the large income tax cuts that passed the



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Visit Don's Website:  
[Hineman for Kansas](#)

## Useful Phone Numbers

Department On Aging  
800-432-3535

Child/Adult Abuse Hotline  
800-922-5330

Child & Family Services  
888-369-4777

Consumer Protection  
800-423-2310

Crime Tip Hotline  
800-252-8477

Crime Victim Assistance  
800-828-9745

legislature in 2012 are at least temporarily shrinking the stream of revenues coming in to the state's coffers.

Though I have not had an opportunity to visit with either of these two individuals, it is plain to see what their objective is. If agricultural valuations could somehow be increased, then farmers would pay more in property tax to local government, but also in the 20 mills statewide levy for public schools. So these individuals, both of whom represent Johnson County and have few if any farmers as constituents, probably see this as an easy way to help pay the bill for additional school funding.

They see agricultural land as a target because agricultural land receives special treatment under the Kansas Constitution. While other classes of real property are valued for property tax purposes based on market value of the property, ag land is valued based on its income or productivity... its use value. So these legislators hope that by tinkering with the formula that is used to compute use value, they can raise ag land valuations and generate more money for schools throughout the state.

When the 2012 income tax cut was being debated, my main concern was that reducing income taxes would put upward pressure on property taxes. The Johnson County legislator's line of questioning is evidence that concern was and is valid. The fact that nearly two-thirds of Kansas counties found it necessary to raise their mill levies in 2013 is another warning sign.

The methodology used to determine use values is complicated, but it must be to produce valid results. For those who want more information, [this page](#) from the website of the Property Valuation Division of the Department of Revenue is a good resource.

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## There's an App for That

That ubiquitous phrase has permeated all of society, and agriculture is not to be left out. The folks at Texas A&M University have compiled a list of agriculture-related apps, both from their own shop and from other sources, including other universities, government, and commercial vendors. If you are a farmer or rancher and have been looking for or hoping for a particular farm-related app, [take a look here](#).

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## 2014 Campaign

The 2014 election season is rapidly approaching, with the primary on August 5, 2014 and the general election on November 4. I must prepare now if I am to meet the challenge that next year's election could bring, and I have already taken the first step by filing for re-election.

Early contributions will allow me to prepare so that I can mount the most effective campaign when the time comes. As a reminder, following last year's redistricting by the Federal courts, changes to my 118th district mean I'm now the "Topeka Voice" for many new families. It takes a good campaign

Gov- Brownback  
800-748-4408

Highway Road Conditions  
511 (in Kansas)

Housing Hotline  
800-752-4422

KanCare Assistance  
866-305-5147

Kansas Lottery  
800-544-9467

Legislative Hotline  
800-432-3924

Mental Health Services  
888-582-3759

School Safety Hotline  
877-626-8203

Social Security  
800-772-1213

Taxpayer Assistance  
785-368-8222

Tax Refund Status  
800-894-0318

Unclaimed Property  
800-432-0386

Unemployment Insurance  
800-292-6333

Vital Statistics  
785-296-1400

Voter Registration  
800-262-8683

Welfare Fraud Hotline  
800-432-3913

Worker's Comp  
800-332-0353

account balance to reach these people in the four new counties of Scott, Thomas, Sheridan, and Graham.

You may contribute online [here](#) or by sending a check to:

**Hineman for Kansas**  
116 S. Longhorn Rd.  
Dighton, KS 67839

Contribution limit (per election cycle) is \$500 and is nondeductible. Contributions may be accepted from individuals at any time. Contributions from businesses and corporations cannot be accepted after January 2 of the coming election year. I would appreciate your support now.

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### **Cowboy Logic**

Don't get mad at somebody who knows more 'n you do. It ain't their fault.

### **Quote of the week**

"Prosperity is only an instrument to be used, not a deity to be worshipped". - Calvin Coolidge

### **Sermon in a sentence**

No one ever choked to death from swallowing his pride.

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### **Representative Don Hineman**

Visit My Website at <http://www.hinemanforkansas.org/>

116 S. Longhorn Road	Room 50A, State Capitol Building
Dighton, Kansas 67839	300 SW 10th Street
Phone: 620-397-2504	Topeka, Kansas 66612
Fax: 620-397-755	Phone: 785-296-7636
Email: <a href="mailto:dhineman@st-tel.net">dhineman@st-tel.net</a>	Email: <a href="mailto:don.hineman@house.ks.gov">don.hineman@house.ks.gov</a>

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**Newsletter Paid for by Hineman For Kansas - Derek Martin, Treasurer**