

MAY 2005

WELCOME TO KAIRS TODAY!

This is the monthly electronic newsletter of the Kansas Association of Religious and Independent Schools (KAIRS). KAIRS TODAY is sent as a service to KAIRS members across Kansas.

Our goal is to keep you informed about legislative, regulatory and national news, and educational issues. Please look for this on the 20th of each month. Contact Corey Reese, editor, with questions or concerns – crkairs@yahoo.com.

From the Editor – This is our last issue of the 2004-05 year. KAIRS Today goes “on vacation” for the summer and will resume in September. Should you have any questions over the summer, please feel free to email KAIRS at crkairs@yahoo.com. Have a blessed and safe summer!

MAY ISSUE:

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SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING – SALINA

As you plan your fall calendar, please note that the September 13 General Membership meeting will be in Salina and not Topeka. Please watch your email in early September, as members will be alerted as to the exact location.

TUITION FUNDING IDEAS FROM BOB VOBORIL

Bob Voboril, KAIRS Public Policy Director, was president of KAIRS for several years, and now provides insights and direction to the organization in public policy. Bob also sends out a monthly electronic newsletter to KAIRS Public Policy Liaisons. These updates help the liaisons keep current on the latest legislative issues that may have an impact on KAIRS. Our liaisons are primarily interested parents who volunteer to keep their schools informed.

From Bob:

At our April KAIRS meeting, we discussed at length what the KAIRS public policy agenda should be on the issue of school funding. In the past, KAIRS has supported tuition tax credits for parents; endorsed the philosophical

arguments for vouchers while noting the significant practical concerns; and been mute about tax credits for donors to non-public schools.

During our discussion, we seemed to conclude that

- * A tuition tax credit for parents would be good but would not really change the current funding challenges parents and non-public schools face;
- * Vouchers run a grave risk of government regulation and seem to be unfeasible in the current Kansas political climate; and
- * We need to know more about tuition tax credits for businesses and donors before we can discuss the topic intelligently.

I promised to research the topic and report back to you on some of the policy issues, examples of the programs currently in force, and some of the possible options. Below I have included several articles that will provide you with a variety of reference points. Please review them, discuss them with the appropriate leaders at your schools, and be prepared in September to have an informed discussion at the fall KAIRS meeting.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Bob

(From the editor – we have attempted to summarize the reference materials that Bob provided. If you would like to have the entire articles, please email KAIRS at crkairs@yahoo.com.)

From The Center for Arizona Policy

“In the current Arizona tax code, individuals are given a tax credit for contributions to organization that provide educational scholarships. Adding corporate contributions for private schools would allow for more scholarships for low-income families, and broaden the number of families able to choose the education they deem best for their children.”

Arizona’s legislature passed an initial bill in 1997 that provided tuition tax credits for “individual contributions to schools.” With the passage of that bill came the creation of STOs (School tuition organizations). These STOs provide scholarships to children who are attending private schools. Two years ago, there were 47 Arizona STOs, which had given out more than 36,000 scholarships.

Earlier this year, bills were introduced to both Arizona houses that would extend tuition tax credits to corporations. These bills allow for greater amounts of funds to be raised which would help low-income families to qualify for educational scholarships.

In defense of these bills, the Center offers the following “Talking Points.”

- Tax credits for scholarship saves the State of Arizona thousands of dollars.
- School choice and competition helps improve state public education.
- School choice programs are broadly supported nationwide.

- Educational scholarships give parents the freedom to choose the education they deem best for their children.

From The Institute for Justice Web Release, March 24, 2005

Arizona’s Scholarship Tuition Tax Credit Again Upheld by Court as Constitutional.

“Phoenix, AZ. – Federal District Court Judge Earl Carroll today granted the Institute for Justice Arizona Chapter’s motion and dismissed the Arizona Civil Liberties Union’s (AzCLU) frivolous legal challenge to the state’s innovative Educational Tax Credit program. The Institute represents the Arizona School Choice Trust (ASCT), a scholarships-granting organization, and parents whose children receive scholarships from ASCT.

“...Despite prior rulings from both the Arizona Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court that school choice programs meet federal constitutional requirements, the AzCLU in the federal lawsuit dismissed today had contended that the scholarship tax credit violates the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause.

“...’Arizona’s Tuition Scholarship Tax Credit provides thousands of Arizona children the opportunity for a better education, but there are thousands more eager families on waiting lists, ‘ said Institute for Justice Staff Attorney Jennifer Barnett.

“...In 1999, the Arizona Supreme Court rejected a similar challenge under the Arizona Constitution, in a case also litigated by the Institute for Justice. In addition, IJ successfully defended tax credits in Illinois and vouchers in Cleveland and Milwaukee. IJ is currently defending Florida’s groundbreaking Opportunity Scholarships program.”

From the Mackinac Center for Public Policy
Vouchers or Tuition Tax Credits – Which is the Better
Choice for School Choice?
Tuesday July 27, 2004

Joseph Lehman spoke to the members of the National Conference of State Legislatures at its annual meeting in Salt Lake City on July 20, 2004. He is the

executive vice president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a Michigan-based nonprofit, nonpartisan research and educational institute.

This speaker uses a study published by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in April 2004 at its premise. It compares “domestic and international voucher and tax credit programs.” Mr. Lehman discusses the differences between vouchers and tax credits on three levels: “their ability to overcome legal challenges, promote fiscal soundness and provide educational accountability.”

Mr. Lehman covers all three of the aspects listed above, with tax credits being slightly more favorable in all three areas. The speech is a thoughtful discussion of the issue, particularly in light of the audience being state legislators.

If you would like read the printed version of the speech in its entirety, please request this at crkairs@yahoo.com.

KAIRS.org UPDATE

Please visit KAIRS.org soon if you haven't done so in a while. Our web designer recently updated the information on the site and we hope you'll enjoy the additional information! We always appreciate feedback – positive or “critical” so please send any emails to crkairs@yahoo.com.

THANKS TO JUDY PITTS

As Judy Pitt's term on the KAIRS Committee of Officers expires, our organization would like to thank Judy for her selfless work as our Annual Meeting Secretary. Thank you Judy!

KAIRS 2004-05 OFFICERS

President: Karen Norton, The Independent School, Wichita

Vice President: Nick Compagnone, Catholic Diocese of Salina

Secretary: Bill Dieckhoff, Holy Cross Lutheran, Wichita

Treasurer: David Swank, Trinity Academy, Wichita

Annual Meeting Secretary, Judy Pitts, Bethel Life School, Wichita

IMPORTANT DATES

Sept. 13: General Membership Meeting, Salina, 10 am

Nov. 8: General Membership Meeting, Topeka, 10 am

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