



When it comes to preparing for a safe return to school, five Kansas State Board of Education members vote to support a delay making a clear point that we can't "local control" a global pandemic.

TOPEKA- On behalf of its members, Kansas NEA applauds Kansas State Board of Education Board members Janet Waugh, Ann Mah, Kathy Busch, Jim Porter, and Jim McNiece for their support of Governor Kelly's order to delay the reopening of schools until after labor day. **"Five of our state board members chose to lead with courage at a time when leadership is needed, and they have our sincere appreciation. Sadly, five others shrugged their shoulders and told our students and educators, 'sorry, not our problem,'"** KNEA President Mark Farr.

Board members Janet Waugh and Kathy Busch made it clear that while local control is vital, local control can't stem the spread of a virulent global pandemic. KNEA agrees and is disappointed that five members of the Kansas State Board of Education chose to shirk their responsibility to keep students and school district employees safe as they voted against the Governor's order.

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In response to today's split vote, KNEA President Mark Farr said, "every educator in Kansas wants- more than anything- to be back in school with students. As we've seen over and over, this virus doesn't recognize boundaries or borders and is only controlled when everyone does their part. Today's split-vote ensures that partisan opinion will guide decision making in many districts rather than common sense, rooted in science and supported by medical experts. Sadly, many district leaders have already indicated that they intend to return to 'business as usual,' which has proven to be a recipe to grow the spread and impact of this pandemic."

KNEA will continue to give full-throated support to those Kansas leaders at the state and local levels who take measures to ensure that returning to school is safe, according to the medical experts from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment who are advising Governor Kelly. KNEA does not believe that any student, educator, or patron should face a choice between returning to school and their health or well-being.

Kansas NEA encourages its members to contact and express gratitude to the state board of education members who voted today to support Governor Kelly's effort to ensure a safe return to school. We also encourage members to utilize the HELP tool on the KNEA website or to contact their local leaders or their UniServ office directly with concerns over their safe return to school. **"KNEA will continue to advocate and support members after today's action. Even as five members of the state board of education have chosen to look the other way when it comes to a safe return to school, we're encouraged that five did not look away, and our organization never will," said KNEA President Mark Farr.**

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