

(Continued)

If received, Garrett, Coppedge and Keating all agree that the funds could be used to improve the reading, writing, math and science skills of the state's teachers.

FROM: BRANDON BEARD

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## STUDY SAYS EDUCATION FUNDING LAGS, OKLAHOMA STILL IN BOTTOM TEN AFTER ADJUSTMENT

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Even when it is adjusted to reflect the state's low cost of living, Oklahoma common education funding still lags far behind most other states, according to a new study released Monday.

"We know we can stretch a dollar farther in Oklahoma, but we can't stretch it far enough to make our public schools competitive at the present funding levels," said Senator Don Williams, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education.

The study conducted by the Center for the Study of States adjusted per pupil common education expenditures to reflect each state's respective cost of living. Although Oklahoma's national ranking on K-12 education investment improves slightly when adjusted for cost of living, the state does not rise out of the country's bottom ten.

In the region, Colorado (27th), Kansas (25th), Missouri (30) and Texas (31) all invest more cost of living adjusted dollars in common education.

In a dollar to dollar comparison, for example, Texas invests \$600 dollars more per child than Oklahoma while Kansas invests \$900 more per child.

"The states we are competing with are investing more money on education and as a result, have higher per capita personal incomes.

According to the study, the six states with the highest per capita personal income ranking also have the highest per pupil expenditure ranking.

The six states (including Oklahoma) with the lowest personal income ranking also rank the lowest in per pupil expenditures.

Oklahoma's per capita personal income is 81 percent. When adjusted for cost of living, it rises to 98.1 percent.

"Our low cost of living helps make us more competitive, but it doesn't take us as far as we need to go in education," said Senator Williams.

The Senate leadership is advocating a plan that would invest an additional \$83 million in common education and institute important new reforms as well.

The Senate education package, SB1100, calls for deregulation and public school choice. It also includes funding for new classroom technology, teacher training and performance incentives among other things. Teachers' retirement and midterm funding is being addressed in separate legislation.

Governor Keating has proposed an alternative program for common education, but it contains very little money for actual classroom expenses. Of the new funding proposed for common education in the executive budget, only \$3.1 million would be placed into the funding formula that benefits the classroom budgets of all schools.

The lion's share of the funding would go to retirement, midterm adjustments and miscellaneous education programs. The largest budget item, \$48 million for midterm, would benefit only a few eligible schools. Two-thirds of Oklahoma schools, those that do not qualify for midterm, would not receive a single dollar.

"I think our plan is the best on the table right now because it places the most emphasis on the classrooms in all of our public schools," said Senator Williams.

The full Senate is expected to vote on SB1100 this week, possibly as early as Tuesday.

FROM: SENATE MEDIA

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