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***42 Campaign withdraws ballot lawsuit rather than risk delay
in absentee voting for Mississippi's service men and women***

JACKSON, Miss. (Sept. 18, 2016) – After attempts to resolve the Initiative 42 ballot issue with the secretary of state failed on Friday, the 42 For Better Schools Campaign opted to drop its lawsuit rather than risk a delay in absentee voting for Mississippi's service men and women.

“Although this challenge would not have postponed absentee balloting that begins Saturday, claims to the contrary by state election officials gave us no choice but to withdraw the lawsuit,” said Jonathan Compretta and Michael Rejebian, co-campaign managers for 42 For Better Schools. “Our focus now is to educate voters on how to navigate the misleading ballot language that state officials have intentionally adopted to manipulate this election.”

The 42 For Better Schools Campaign sent a letter to Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann on Thursday inviting a meeting to reach a compromise on the contested ballot language without going to court. In a tele-conference held Friday, Hosemann's representatives made it clear that no such compromise would be offered. That decision comes at the expense of the nearly 200,000 Mississippians who signed petitions to place Initiative 42 on the Nov. 3 ballot.

In withdrawing the lawsuit, the Campaign retained its rights to raise the ballot language challenges later, including a post-election challenge if necessary.

The lawsuit, which was filed Sept. 14, asked a judge to order the measure's full text printed on the Nov. 3 ballot, not just the erroneous language officials approved the previous week. The complaint challenged “the Secretary of State's preparation and the Governor's approval of an incomplete and unlawful sample ballot for Initiative Measure 42,” the 11-page document stated.

Education funding supporters contend that the approved ballot does not contain original initiative language proposing a multi-year phase-in to fully fund K-12 schools, which have been fully funded only twice since the 1997 passage of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, the funding formula. They also objected to the ballot's use only of the Legislative Budget Office's fiscal analysis for Initiative 42, saying, the LBO's work “is susceptible to manipulation by the legislative leadership.”

In the past eight years, the Legislature has failed to deliver on nearly \$1.7 billion funds promised through the MAEP. As a result, some 150 school districts throughout the state continue to suffer from lack of state support, while their local governments feel the pressure to raise property taxes to help bridge the gap.

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