



Legislative leader tries to scare voters, who want schools funded

JACKSON, Miss. (July 7, 2015) – Supporters of the 42 For Better Schools campaign today called state Rep. Herb Frierson’s threats to slash state budgets if Initiative 42 passes the lowest, most despicable form of scare-tactic politics and vowed to unleash the full fury of public school parents across Mississippi.

“Does it get any lower than essentially to hold hostage the education of our children?” said Sissy Lynn of Ridgeland, the state’s 2015 Parent of the Year and part of the campaign to pass Initiative 42. “We expect our leaders to support public education, not to attempt to scare voters into believing that the sky will fall if we fully fund our schools.”

Initiative 42 will require the Legislature to abide by the school-funding law it passed 18 years ago but has fully funded only twice. Nearly 200,000 Mississippians signed petitions in 2014 to put it to a vote on Nov. 3.

Sondra Odom of Pearl, vice president of the Mississippi Association of School Boards, also weighed in, blasting Frierson’s call for state agency budget chiefs to make plans for a 7.8 percent cut if Initiative 42 passes.

“Mr. Frierson’s threats are no different than a father falsely telling his child: ‘I’ll buy you all the books you can read, but if I do, you will have no clothes to wear and no bike to ride,’” said Odom, a long-time Pearl School Board leader. “These falsehoods erode trust in our elected leaders, whose commitment to public education is sorely lacking.”

In fact, calculations by analysts for the 42 For Better Schools Campaign show that Mississippi’s public schools can be fully funded through the Mississippi Adequate Education Program by using general fund revenue from the state budget. Those revenues have grown an average of 3 percent each year for the past 10 years. Just a quarter of that growth amounts to \$37.5 million per year. At that rate, it would take only seven years to fully fund MAEP through this gradual funding effort.

Rana Tabb Mitchell of Eupora, a Carroll County school administrator and mother of two public school students, said Initiative 42 supporters have always offered a way to phase in full K-12 funding without jeopardizing other agency budgets.

“Nearly 200,000 public school supporters signed petitions with the understanding that full funding of our schools need not result in draconian budget measures,” said Mitchell, a member of the 42 Campaign. “For Mr. Frierson, these scare tactics will have the opposite effect by galvanizing our resolve to pass 42 and to hold him and our other legislators accountable for their inaction.”

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For more information about Initiative 42, go to www.42forbetterschools.org.

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