



[KEA Home](#) [Hot Topics](#) [Members Only](#) [About KEA](#)

For all KEA legislative activity, visit:



[KEA Action Alert](#) - KEA message on pieces of critical legislation



Friend Kentucky's Education Advocates on Facebook!

[Contact Your Legislator](#)



[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

## Legislative News February 1, 2012

### Charter Schools

On Monday night, I appeared as a guest on KET's *Kentucky Tonight* to voice our continuing opposition to charter schools. The other guests were: Carl Rollins (D-Woodford), Chair of House Education (who is also opposed to charter schools); Senator Ken Winters (R-Calloway), Chair of Senate Education (who is in favor of charter schools); and Hal Heiner, a private citizen who represents "Kentuckians for Reform in Education (KARE)," a pro-charter organization that is running an expensive media campaign promoting charters. (When I asked him about the source and extent of his funding, Mr. Heiner would not answer.) View the video from KET at [http://www.ket.org/cgi-bin/cheetah/watch\\_video.pl?nola=kkyto+001908&altdir=&template=](http://www.ket.org/cgi-bin/cheetah/watch_video.pl?nola=kkyto+001908&altdir=&template=)

Contrary to the misinformation being broadcast by KARE, Kentucky's schools are doing better than ever. Just recently, Education Week's *Quality Counts* report ranked Kentucky's public schools 14th in the nation, a jump of 20 full points in just one year. One of the highest scores Kentucky received on the multi-point assessment was on "teacher quality," where we rank 5th in the nation. Of course, that high score comes as no surprise to KEA and its members, all of whom are dedicated professionals who work exceptionally hard on behalf of their students each and every day. <http://tiny.cc/vkg52>

Heiner and other charter proponents consistently state that public schools are "failing" and that charter schools offer a better educational experience because they can operate outside the laws and regulations that apply to public schools. Ironically, there are a number of legislators, including Senator Winters, who accept that argument. But the fact is, if there are laws and regulations holding back progress in Kentucky's public schools, those laws and regulations were put in place by legislators. If those rules are a problem, then the legislature should relieve all public schools from those burdens instead of creating a separate system of schools that will be afforded special treatment.

Proponents of charter schools really want to establish a "separate and unequal" system of education where only those students with highly involved parents, reliable private transportation, and no special needs or discipline problems will be allowed. And of course, they want to create that system with public funds. If Hal Heiner and his secret backers are successful, every taxpayer in Kentucky will be subsidizing charter schools. Furthermore, it is well worth noting that 30 states with charter

schools ranked below Kentucky in the *Quality Counts* study. There simply is no legitimate reason for the legislature to create and fund another education system at the expense of Kentucky's public school students.

**Every Kentucky student deserves a great public school. In stark contrast to charter school proponents, KEA and legislators like Representative Rollins believe that all Kentucky's children are worthy of the best education the commonwealth can provide.** In an effort to address that very point, Chairman Rollins sponsored [HB 37](#), his "districts of innovation" bill. That bill will allow local school districts to create new and exciting instructional programs in existing public schools that are appropriate for the area and tailored to the needs of the students. It will also keep SEEK money flowing to the local public schools instead of diverting valuable resources to essentially private entities like charters. Chairman Rollins' "districts of innovation" bill was heard by the House Education Committee yesterday and passed unanimously. It will now go to the entire House chamber for consideration.

But despite the Chairman's efforts, the charter debate is not over. Tuesday, February 14, the House Education Committee will likely take up [HB 77](#), a charter school bill sponsored by Representative Brad Montell (R-Shelby). KEA and other groups who support public education will be there to testify against the measure. We fully expect Hal Heiner and other charter school proponents to testify in favor.

### House Education Committee

In addition to its action on [HB 37](#) (see above), the committee also heard and approved the following bills:

[HB 305](#) (Rollins, D-Woodford), a bill implementing Executive Order 2011-534. The bill attaches the Early Childhood Advisory Council to the governor's office and reorganizes the administration of the council.

[HB 255](#) (Adkins, D-Elliott), a bill establishing the Kentucky Green Schools Authority, which will offer funding to schools that work toward energy efficiency. Representative Adkins offered compelling testimony from administrators and students in schools that are already actively engaged in this work.

[HB 281](#) (Jenkins, D-Jefferson), a bill requiring coaches to complete training on recognizing and treating concussions and head injuries. This measure was so well received by the committee that virtually no testimony was required before it was unanimously approved.

All these bills will now go to the full House for consideration.

Sincerely,

*Sharron K. Oxendine*

KEA President



Try it FREE today.