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## Rep. David Hess: Resolve the school funding issue or the court will do it for us

By REP. DAVID HESS Another View

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**THERE IS** a dangerous premise circulating the halls of the State House in Concord these days that not only flies in the face of the New Hampshire Supreme Court ruling on education funding, but could very well represent the first step in a thinly veiled back door effort to enact a broadbased tax.

The Supreme Court was clear in ruling that the legislative and executive branches of government have a four-fold responsibility: (1) define an adequate education; (2) cost it; (3) provide and pay for it; and (4) ensure its delivery through accountability.

A supposition, promoted in a joint op-ed piece on these pages by the Democratic chairs of the House and Senate Education committees ("Finally, NH will put our kids' educational needs first, money second," Jan. 26) that elected representatives need only address the definition of adequate, and should postpone the resolution of the remaining three components of the crisis until some indefinite date, is not only defective, it is just plain bad public policy.

Those who promote this supposition have ignored the fact that all four elements must be addressed simultaneously in order to enact meaningful legislation.

The education crisis is not just about the definition of an adequate education. When shopping for an automobile, would you enter the showroom, select a Kia, a Ford or a Cadillac and drive it off the lot without knowing how much it would cost or whether you had enough money to pay for it? Of course not!

Without having to worry about the finances, we'd all pick the Cadillac. If we wouldn't think of doing this in a personal transaction of less than \$50,000, then how can we justify doing it when the issue is the education of 200,000 children with a potential price tag of over \$1.3 billion? To state the proposition is to reveal its absurdity.

The Nashua Telegraph has called this approach a "new stalling tactic on school aid." The Concord Monitor says that it is "not good enough." The Union Leader describes it as, "Hello, Mr. Broadbase." All these descriptions apply. Additionally, the attorney general has left no doubt that, by merely acting on the definition issue, we run the risk that the court will take over all four issues.

We have the ability to address the issue and we share the responsibility as elected officials to resolve the education issue in its entirety, sooner rather than later. Failure to do so demonstrates a lack of will and determination and leaves the lingering suspicion: Is this 25 percent solution a "rung on the broadbased tax ladder" and a threat to the New Hampshire Advantage that we enjoy?

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