



42 supporter: 'We're not slowing up for our children'
High court decision retains AG's ballot title

JACKSON, Miss. (Aug. 13, 2015) – Supporters of a citizens' ballot initiative for public school funding said today a new court decision merely galvanizes their determination to win its passage in November.

“We are not slowing up for our children,” said Adrian Shipman of Oxford, a member of the 42 For Better Schools campaign, which promotes Initiative 42. “Regardless of what the Supreme Court says, we are completely dedicated to winning Nov. 3 for the sake of all our children's futures. And certainly, it doesn't change the fact that the legislative alternative to Initiative 42 is nothing more than our lawmakers' best effort to confuse voters and hold public education hostage.”

Initiative 42, supported by nearly 200,000 petition signatures gathered in 2014, aims to change the Mississippi constitution to require the Legislature to fully fund K-12 education, promised in a 1997 law. Full funding has occurred only twice since then.

In April, Shipman, the mother two Oxford public school children, filed a legal objection to the wording of a legislative alternative to Initiative 42.

In her complaint, Shipman challenged the Legislature's wording of its alternative, which she insisted did not follow the law, was too similar to 42 and aimed at confusing voter enough to kill both measures.

Circuit Judge Winston Kidd agreed with Shipman and re-worded the alternative, which is what today's MSSC decision addressed after legislative leaders appealed.

Since 2008, public schools statewide have been short-changed nearly \$1.7 billion, which has put pressure on local governments to increase property taxes to bridge funding gaps. The lack of financial support has put pressure on county and municipal governments to raise property taxes to bridge the gaps.

Today's MSSC decision – to reverse Kidd's decision and uphold the Attorney General's ballot title – is in response to the legal appeal by legislative leaders, including Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves and House Speaker Philip Gunn, questioning Kidd's authority and the 1993 law that states his ruling about the ballot measure's wording cannot be appealed. It's also the first time the high court has considered such a case because it's the first time the Legislature has passed an initiative alternative since the law was enacted in 1993.

Shipman noted that “whatever 42-A's ballot title says, it doesn't change our voters determination. They understand the alternative is a ploy to split the vote and kill both measures.”

In this week's first public forum about the two measures, 42-A author Rep. Greg Snowden of Meridian admitted as much.

“Would we have brought 42-A forward without 42? Or course not,” Snowden told a Jackson crowd of mostly Initiative 42 supporters. “Secondly, is 42-A intended to make it more difficult to pass 42? Of course it is, of course it is – we're straightforward about that.”

Initiative 42's ballot title states: **Should the state be required to provide for the support of an adequate and efficient system of free public schools?**

Initiative 42-A's original title stated: **Should the Legislature provide for the establishment and**

support of effective public schools without judicial enforcement?

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NOTE: For more information about Initiative 42, go to www.42ForBetterSchools.org