

School funding process is hit

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The Republican challenger for the 66th Dist. House seat said today the Kansas Legislature and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius could have resolved the school finance debate out of court, had they been effective leaders. Rather than work out a solution, they simply defaulted their responsibilities to the courts," said Bob Strawn, who is challenging incumbent Democrat Sydney Carlin in November's general election. Strawn said he was not arguing that additional school funding was not required. But the process for getting it lacked political courage and wisdom," he said. We elect legislators to make these decisions on our behalf. We select a governor to lead the process. Neither branch was up to the task in this matter ... "Ê

Carlin, who supported the school funding package that was upheld recently by the Kansas Supreme Court, said her opponent's assertions boiled down to politics. Strawn said Sebelius should have sat down and ironed this out" with school district and legislative leaders. Carlin defended both the Legislature and fellow-Democrat Sebelius as actively engaged in the process. But she said that political process has its limitations, especially when it comes to one of the most divisive issues in the state. "She did bring people in to the room. She brought in the people who would work with her," Carlin said of Sebelius. And "in the Legislature, we tried various methods to solve the problem. "She could have done even better if there were some others that would have worked with her," she added. Strawn said if this kind of thing had happened in the business world, the governor would have been fired as a manager. "The governor has to step up and say am I the leader of this state, or I am not. I'm not going to let her off the hook on that," he said. "Even though the ends may be acceptable ... the ends don't justify the means." He said the lack of action at the state level "opens up Pandora's Box ... I mean, whose going to be next to sue the state?" Carlin dismissed Strawn's comments as "party line rhetoric," adding that Republicans have long attacked Sebelius' leadership ability, which has "always been her strength. "We came through the worst state crisis in history ... and it was because of effective, good leadership and good management," Carlin said. "We're not of the woods, but we're doing it right." The general election is Nov. 7. You can reach Kathryn Mayes by phone at 776-2300, ext. 246, or by e-mail at kmayes@themercury.com