

JCPS teacher: We don't need a sickout on Kentucky legislature's last day

Emilie Blanton, Opinion contributor

Published 6:36 a.m. ET March 25, 2019 | Updated 6:37 a.m. ET March 25, 2019



As we approach the end of the 2019 session, I find myself reflecting on where we go from here. I have been teaching for 11 years, and this has been the single-most confusing session since I began teaching. Many have been hounded by misinformation as we all try to make sense of a very stressful time.

To those who say, "We are needed at the Capitol on March 28th!" on Thursday is sine die. Any bills Bevin vetoed are sent back to the legislators to maybe override the veto. None of the bills we have been watching as educators are eligible. [House Bill 205](#) and [House Bill 525](#) died.

To those who say, "We have to watch the legislators! They pulled the sewage bill last year!" You're right. We watched the sewage bill unfold from home and reacted afterward. Educators have been pre-emptively watching. They will not resurrect [HB 205](#) or [HB 525](#) to pass them in a

day. And if they do? That's what Attorney General Andy Beshear is for. Senate Bill 151 from 2018 was thrown out because it didn't follow procedure.

Read this: [Courier Journal relaunches editorial board to tackle Kentucky's tough issues](#)

To those who say, "There could be a special session!" You're correct. [Bevin tried that over Christmas](#), and it blew up. It's about \$60,000 a day to run a special session. The bills being watched do not create enough revenue to justify the cost.

You can count on Sen. Morgan McGarvey or Rep. Rocky Adkins to tell him he is wasting money. There weren't enough votes during the regular session.

To those who say, "So what are our next steps?" Our next step is showing up at the polls. We should have seen much bigger results following the 2018 sickouts. We looked mobilized and motivated!

But then it fizzled. Elections happened and not enough seats were flipped. You have a primary election in May and an election in November. You have to show up and vote with public education in mind.

To those who say, "I don't trust JCTA anymore!" You're entitled to that opinion. We can't blow up the teachers union. The last point I brought up about showing up for elections counts for JCTA too. Have you voted every time you're eligible?

JCTA doesn't hide these things. This is a great time to see if your personal email and cellphone are up to date in the JCTA office. This is not a time to drop the union because you're unhappy. Blowing up JCTA from the inside is the worst thing we could do to the entire state.

We have to participate in our democratic republic. You have to vote for legislators that agree with you. If there's a candidate who you agree with on many things but not their stance on public education, be prepared for the fact that they might do things that dismantle public education.

Bevin has never made his feelings about public education a secret. He did not act like Jim Justice, the governor of West Virginia. Justice ran as a Democrat and asked the teachers to support him. They helped elect him with the promise of a much-needed raise. After being elected, he switched to Republican and turned his back on the teachers. That's why they had a strike with a specific ask.

Opinion: [For the health of our kids, let's make Kentucky schools tobacco free](#)

Bevin is many things, but he is not Jim Justice. He told us exactly what he was going to do. Engage in our democratic republic. Read up on candidates. Find out their stances on different issues. If you don't understand something, reach out and ask someone. There is no shame in wishing to educate yourself.

No more Facebook groups. It's a horrible way to mobilize. The posts with the most interactions pop to the top. Sometimes those posts are full of misinformation, which has been abhorrent this session, whether intentionally or accidentally.

I'm not sure why someone would deliberately outrage us with inaccurate information. We saw that happen the night of March 13, when it was brought up that HB 205 had transformed into SB 118, when HB 205 was a revenue bill and thus must originate in the House.

I watched a lie spread in the Capitol on March 12, as someone claiming to be a staffer came and said McGarvey had sent everyone a special message that [HB 205](#) was going to be a rider on another bill. McGarvey even said it was false, yet the lie still spread. Why are people lying and who is being served?

Finally, let's do the delegate thing on Thursday. I truly believe it will work. I truly believe both JCPS Superintendent Marty Pollio and JCTA President Brent McKim had teachers' and students' best interests at heart when they reached the deal. I trust Dr. Pollio as my superintendent completely. The best place for students and teachers is in the classroom. We can do this.