



CALIFORNIA SCHOOL FINANCE LITIGATION Robles-Wong v. California

Case Summary

Legal Approach and Factual Allegations

Education is a fundamental right under the California Constitution. The State has defined this right through adoption of academic content standards that are “based on the knowledge and skills that pupils will need in order to succeed in the information-based, global economy of the 21st century.” Cal. Educ. Code §60602. Curriculum, instructional materials, teacher training, assessments and accountability measures are all aligned with these academic standards. This standards-based education program clearly defines what all schools must teach and what all students are expected to learn.

Unfortunately, the State’s current school finance system is based on outdated and irrational formulas and policies that fail to support the prescribed education program. The funding amounts and financing mechanisms are not tied to the academic goals of the State and the learning needs of our students. Funding is insufficient to provide essential educational programs and services. As a result, many students, and a disproportionate number of disadvantaged students, are denied an opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st century.

The State’s failure to develop and implement a school finance system that supports the prescribed education program and accounts for the learning needs of all of our students is a violation of its basic duties under the California Constitution.

Remedy

The plaintiffs seek a declaration that the State’s school finance system is unconstitutional and an injunction requiring the State to develop and implement a constitutional finance system that supports the prescribed education program and accounts for the learning needs of all of our students. The plaintiffs are not asking the court to mandate a particular school finance system, order specific allocation methods, or determine the amount of money that the State should spend on K-12 public education.



Plaintiffs

There are approximately 60 individual student plaintiffs and parents, including Maya Robles-Wong (11th grader in the Alameda Unified School District) and Nigel Robinson (8th grader in the Folsom Cordova Unified School District).

There are nine school district plaintiffs:

- Alameda City Unified School District (Alameda County)
- Alpine Elementary School District (San Diego County)
- Del Norte County Unified School District (Del Norte County)
- Folsom Cordova Unified School District (Sacramento County)
- Hemet Unified School District (Riverside County)
- Porterville Unified School District (Tulare County)
- Riverside Unified School District (Riverside County)
- San Francisco Unified School District (San Francisco County)
- Santa Ana Unified School District (Orange County)

There are three statewide association plaintiffs: the California School Boards Association, the Association of California School Administrators, and the California State PTA.

Defendants

The State of California and Governor Schwarzenegger