

KERA UPDATE

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#19

New Armed Forces Data Raises More Concerns About KERA —

Kentucky graduates must compare favorably to kids from other states — It's the law.

In 1989, the Kentucky Supreme Court delivered a landmark ruling that declared the entire public school system in the state was unconstitutional. The court declared a new system would be required, one that would allow Kentucky children to compare favorably with children from other states. One year later, in a response to the Court's decision, the Kentucky Legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Echoing the Court, the opening paragraphs of the enacted legislation say a Kentucky student will acquire "skills to enable him to compete favorably with students in other states."

Despite clear mandates that Kentucky children will compare favorably, it is becoming terribly apparent that quite the opposite is happening. Recently obtained 1996 Armed Forces Recruiting data add to rapidly growing concerns that KERA and

its assessment program, KIRIS, may actually be causing decays in the quality of Kentucky's high school graduates.

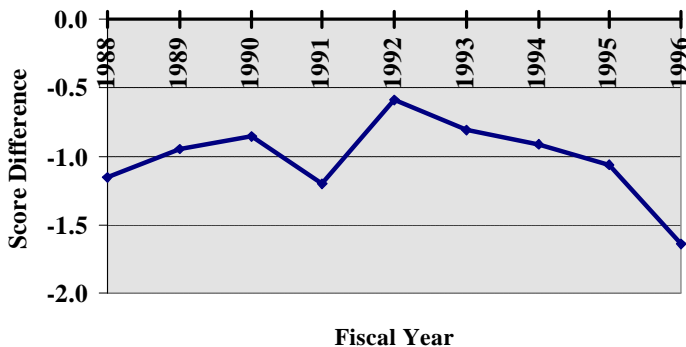
Data on Armed Forces recruitment offers a true look at employment data. The military, like the civilian sector, carefully analyzes future applicants. However, unlike private industry, test scores and recruitment rates are readily available for the Armed Forces on a state-by-state basis. The data for Kentucky does not look good. In fact: *Armed Forces Qualification Test*

The latest Armed Forces data shows test results and enlistment of Kentucky's recruits is in steady decline.

Scores drop again The difference between AFQT scores of Kentucky recruits and the average for kids from Kentucky's bordering states dropped again in 1996. This was the 4th straight year of decline since KIRIS testing began in 1992. The drop from 1995 to 1996 was also the largest one year drop in the period from 1992 to 1996, a half a point.

Kentuckians success in getting in the military also declined farther below regional average Lower testing scores are reflected in actual recruitment, too. Kentucky slid below the region's average recruiting rate immediately after KERA was enacted. But, in 1996, it can be seen that a sharp further decline in recruitment coincided with the sharp one-year drop in the AFQT scores. Clearly, at least as far as one employer is concerned, KERA is failing to meet one of the most important goals of all and: *Kentucky is falling behind.*

Difference Between Kentucky's AFQT Scores and Regional Average



Difference Between Kentucky's Recruitment Rate and the Regional Average

