

Plaintiffs in school funding case ask – again – for lawmakers to be held in contempt of court

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By Melissa Santos

The people who sued the state in a landmark school funding case still want the state Supreme Court to hold the Legislature in contempt, despite pleas from several former governors last week that the court give lawmakers more time.

In a brief filed Monday, the plaintiffs in *McCleary vs. State of Washington* renewed their request for the Supreme Court to take action if lawmakers don't finalize a detailed education funding plan by the end of the year. The plaintiffs – a group of parents, school districts and education advocacy groups – said the court could impose sanctions such as fining lawmakers or closing the school system, among others.

"It is not unreasonable to expect Washington lawmakers to meet in additional, special sessions to comply with Orders issued by the Washington Supreme Court," wrote lawyer Thomas Ahearne, who is representing the plaintiffs.

It's a request that the plaintiffs already made earlier this year after lawmakers didn't come up with a detailed, long-term plan for fully funding education, something the Supreme Court had ordered in January.

In the *McCleary* case, the Supreme Court ruled that the state is failing to meet its constitutional duty to fully fund education in Washington, and must do so by 2018. The court retained jurisdiction over the case, and has requested frequent progress reports from the Legislature since the 2012 ruling. (You can read all the filings in the *McCleary* case on the state Supreme Court's website.) The Supreme Court is now ordering lawyers for the state to appear before the court for a show-cause hearing Sept. 3 to explain why the Legislature should not be held in contempt. The state has argued that holding lawmakers in contempt or shutting down the state's school system would only hurt the state's ability to educate students and come up with a permanent education funding solution.

"At best, Plaintiffs' suggested sanctions are impractical, unproductive, or destructive of those objectives," lawyers for the state wrote in a court filing last month.

In the latest brief filed Monday, the plaintiffs outlined once again why they think the court should hold the Legislature in contempt or impose other sanctions.

The state will have a chance to respond later this month.

Read more here: <http://www.thenewtribune.com/2014/08/12/3327217/plaintiffs-in-school-funding-case.html?sp=/99/296/331/#storylink=cpy>