

House Education Committee
on
House Bill 2345
submitted by
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Palco USD #269, a member of Schools for Quality Education

March 4, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Please accept this brief written testimony on behalf of Schools for Quality Education (SQE) in opposition to House Bill 2345 concerning “conflict of interest” as a restriction on the election of school board members in Kansas.

Our very small districts and even many larger ones find that it is difficult to get citizens to run for our board positions as it is. As an example, in my particular district I am fortunate to have one person running in each of the four open positions this year, but have only one of the positions contested between two people. As superintendent I literally begged two other people to stay on the board since there was no apparent patron willing to run and to serve. (One board member went to the county court house and waited until the last minute to see if anyone was going to offer to run for the particular position!) To restrict eligibility further in these districts will cause a real hardship now and in the future.

If one thinks about businesses in a local community or area, it should be clear to see that business owners can often be among the best potential leaders, usually having a considerable knowledge of finance as well as of the needs and desires of the patrons of the school district area itself. Further, most of us try to do as much business as possible with local entities and to exclude these people from school board service because we may be purchasing bus tires or buying pizzas for staff in-services seems unreasonable. To be unable to support area businesses because a particular

owner may be, or may want to be, a school board member not only causes inconvenience, it just makes little sense for most of us!

On another issue presented in the bill, it is already in statute that teachers and/or employees in the same district cannot serve on boards by whom they are employed—that is a good rule. To eliminate a board member's spouse, for example, as a possible substitute teacher—that is a poor rule. Because of the proposed \$2,000 limit on earnings, in some districts that could provide for less than twenty days of service as a substitute teacher and often board member spouses are among the best-educated and/or most available people in the district. I know in our particular district, I cover classes at least once or twice a week because we do not have enough people to help as substitute teachers.

This bill appears to be one that attempts to provide an answer to something that is not a problem in many, if *any*, of our school districts. It seems that we operate under an adequate system that works well. Let's leave the current law as it is!

Respectfully submitted,

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