

House Education Committee
HB 2345 – A bill regarding school board members and conflicts of interest.
Testimony in Opposition
March 3, 2015

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Committee in opposition to **HB 2345**, regarding school boards and conflicts of interest.

We are fortunate in Lawrence USD 497 to enjoy a high level of interest among our community in school board service. This spring, there are seven candidates seeking one of 4 four-year terms and four candidates seeking one two-year term, prompting a primary election this week. Candidates for office represent a diversity of races, backgrounds, educations, expertise and experiences. This diversity strengthens our school board and our school system.

I oppose **HB 2345** as I believe it will limit quality and qualified candidates from serving on local school boards. Prohibiting the service of anyone who has a spouse, sibling or parent who is an employee or who resides in a home where an employee of a school district or the Department of Education also resides is far-reaching. Restricting anyone who has a substantial interest in any business that works directly with or provides services to the state or school district from board service could affect four current members of our school board: two University of Kansas professors, an individual who works for the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and another who is employed by an engineering firm that provided services as part of our recent bond issue.

Existing Kansas laws adequately deal with conflicts of interest. School board members are prohibited by state law from being an employee of or receiving compensation from their district or from participating in making contracts between their business and the school board on which they serve. A board member can be forced to forfeit their office for a violation of act (K.S.A. 75-4304(e)) and violations of the act could also be a misdemeanor (K.S.A. 75-4306.). Our district also has School Board Member Ethics, Conflict of Interest, Political Activities and Nepotism policies.

We must encourage, not discourage, quality and qualified candidates to serve on school boards. Voters should continue to determine qualifications for school board membership by local election. I strongly encourage you to vote NO on **HB 2345**.

Respectfully,

Shannon Kimball
School Board President, USD 497
Lawrence, KS