

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612
(785) 296-7653
john.bradford@house.ks.gov

125 ROCK CREEK LOOP
LANSING, KANSAS 66043
(913) 683-0871
jbrad125@gmail.com



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JOHN BRADFORD
40TH DISTRICT

TO: Chairman Ron Highland, Members, House Committee on Education
FROM: Representative John Bradford
DATE: February 3, 2016
SUBJECT: House Bill 2504

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2504 School District Re-alignment

When one is looking to make spending reductions in the Kansas Annual Budgeting process, it is only natural to look at the largest claimant of State General Funds (SGF). That is the Department of Education (K-12), taking over 50% of the total SGF budget each year and growing more each and every succeeding year.

It is also paramount that education directed to the classroom remains untouched. Within K-12, the largest expenditure of funds is administration.

The issue now becomes how we reduce administration costs without affecting K-12 classroom education, educational facilities and/or teachers. The answer is obvious that excess capacity needs to be reduced through re-alignment of the School Districts, eliminating unnecessary expenses in manpower, facilities and administrative costs.

Other than a few voluntary re-alignments, Unified School Districts have remained basically unchanged for the past 52 years. The last time the legislature mandated and actually re-drew the district boundaries was in 1963. This is not a new concept, it has been done before. It is past time to look at possible re-alignments, considering the fact that we are faced with finding efficiencies in state government and eliminating wasteful practices.

This bill is a continuation of an effort initiated back in 2010 by then Representative Kevin Yoder. Representative Yoder attempted to reduce the USD's down to 40 districts with each having 10,000 students. Others afterward proposed 10 USD's, aligning a USD under each State School Board Member's district, and even a proposal to go to a single district like the State of Hawaii. All of these have serious issues and would never have passed out of the legislature.

The model that appears best suited for Kansas is the one currently used in 22 Counties, and that is one USD per county.

There are 77 Counties with 2/3/4/5 USDs, all small in student population count, that can be re-aligned under one USD and still never exceed a threshold of 10,000 students in any of the 77 counties. This now brings the total number of counties with one USD to 99 counties.

The six counties remaining for the most part have very large districts with large enrollments and remain relatively untouched by the re-alignment in House Bill 2504.

Through the execution of this bill, 132 school districts will remain. The Kansas Department of Education and the State School Board will oversee the restructuring process. The issue of school boards is also a responsibility to be resolved between the Department of Education and the local counties/USD.

House Bill 2504 further specifies that every 10 year period, the issue of re-aligning school districts will be reviewed for further reductions to find additional efficiencies.

A legislative requested survey to the School Districts sent out in October/November, designed to determine the fiscal savings, shows a fiscal savings to the SGF of roughly \$173 million dollars over ten years (the life of this bill).

This issue is one whose time has come. It is now time to act.

I support House Bill 2504 and would ask that you will join with me to move this bill to the Committee of the Whole.

John Bradford
Kansas State Representative, District 40
913-683-0871 JBrad125@gmail.com