

Legislative Committee Hearing January 26, 2016

Presentation by Larry J. Richardson

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support this proposed legislation.

As one of the founders of the Derby B-B Gun Club I appear before you to respectfully ask that you favorably consider this bill that will officially and specifically allow the use of school facilities throughout Kansas for air gun safety training and practice as a modification of the current statewide “guns in schools” policy.

My interest in this proposed legislation arises from a situation wherein the Derby B-B Gun Club was banned from using the all-purpose facility at Oaklawn Elementary School (part of USD#260 in Derby) after an unbroken 30 year history of using the facility for our program with absolutely no problems or complaints. The main reason our program was conducted for so long without “detection” is that we enjoyed a consistently positive relationship with the USD#260 Facilities staff and the administration and custodial staff. Additionally, all of our activities were conducted on weekday evenings and occasional weekends when no students or staff were present (except for custodial).

In the Spring of 2015, near the end of our yearly program, someone “discovered” our activity and complained to the Superintendent. Based upon this

single complaint, the Superintendent ordered the Facilities department of USD#260 not to renew our contract for the 2015-2016 year.

The decision is reportedly based upon a District policy of ***“no guns or facsimile of weapons on school sites.”***

The Derby B-B Gun program was started in 1981 as part of a nationwide partnership called the “Daisy/Jaycee Shooter Education” program through the Kansas Jaycees. The nationwide Daisy program had been in existence since the mid 1960’s. The Daisy Corporation saw an opportunity to teach firearm safety and knowledge, along with marksmanship to young people ages 8 to 14 using B-B Guns. The Jaycees provided the funding and the local administration and Daisy provided the equipment at low cost. Throughout our long history, we have had around 350 different young boys and girls participate and compete in our program.

Each year at the beginning of each “season” (we start in late October) program participants and parents are given an orientation followed by a two weeks of instruction on gun safety, knowledge and safe gun handling by experienced instructors using a standardized “10-Lesson Guide.” This nationwide standardization of curriculum is important because, at every competition, participants must take a 100 point test based upon that 10 Lesson Guide and the

B-B Gun competition rulebook. The points earned on the test are added to the shooting scores to determine match winners and placement.

Since the program involves shooting competitions against other teams from throughout the state, a lot of practice and experience is required for a young competitor to reach a high level of proficiency. Throughout the training process, young shooters are coached and closely supervised to make sure that, not only are they learning the skill of marksmanship but that they are also doing everything in as safe a manner as possible. That way safe gun handling practices become so ingrained in them that it becomes automatic.

We subsequently appealed to the USD#260 Board of Education to reconsider the decision by the Superintendent and to possibly restructure their “no gun” policy to allow is to use the facility. The Board narrowly refused our appeals on both issues.

In Kansas Public Schools, enjoying the support of taxpayers, School District facilities are routinely made available to outside groups for a myriad of uses as theirs are the only suitable facilities in many communities. School Districts often charge small fees for the use of their facilities, as was the case with our use of Oaklawn Elementary.

All we are asking is that we be afforded the same consideration as that other outside groups enjoy when requesting the use of a school facility.

Since we have had such a long and favorable track record of safety and positive influence on young people through the use of the school facility at Oaklawn Elementary, it is our hope that this legislation will pave the way to allow us and other groups using air guns to use local school facilities throughout Kansas without restriction or discrimination.