

Testimony before the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

February 12, 2016

George Seamon, Director

Northwest Kansas Library System

Good morning, members of the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs. Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony this morning. My name is George Seamon, and I serve as the Director of Northwest Kansas Library System, which is headquartered in Norton. Today I am speaking in opposition to HB 2380 as it stands or in favor of amending this bill, which would switch appointing power from the Governor's Office to local County Commissions.

Currently, regional systems of cooperating libraries are governed by a system board, which is comprised of one representative from each of the member libraries and a Governor's Appointee from each of the counties within our service area. These appointees are required to live in the system's taxing district, which is the area of the county outside of a local public library taxing district. For Northwest Kansas Library System we have a board of 48 representatives and ten (10) Governor's Appointees, which is a total of 58 system board members.

In my opinion, the current appointment process needs to be changed. It has been difficult to find volunteers to be Governor's Appointees once they see the application process. One comment I heard from a prospective appointee about the application process was, "I feel like I am giving away my first born child." I do not intend to argue the merits of the application process, but it is a deterrent for prospective appointees.

If this bill was approved, Northwest Kansas Library System, which is the smallest regional system of cooperating libraries in Kansas, would need to work with ten (10) different appointment processes and criteria as well as 30 different county commissioners to make these appointments. This would make the process cumbersome and inefficient. It would save time, money, and effort to keep the Office of Appointments and have one (1) contact, one (1) process, and one (1) application.

If this bill is to move forward, I would like to propose that this bill be amended to place appointment power in the hands of the State Librarian of Kansas or the State Library of Kansas Board. Currently, the State Library of Kansas Board has oversight of the regional systems of cooperating libraries. This can be found in K.S.A. 75-2552 and K.A.R. 54-1-5 & 54-1-7. Each year, the seven (7) regional systems of cooperating libraries submit their budgets and plans to the State Library of Kansas Board for approval, which is in addition to the budget hearing required of municipalities. Furthermore, my name was submitted to the State Library of Kansas Board for approval when I was hired as director/librarian at Northwest Kansas Library System. This appointment power would fall within a reasonable scope of that existing oversight.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.