



## **Senate Ways and Means Committee**

### **Testimony on SB 212 – Strengthening protection of public employees paychecks**

Submitted by Dr. Martin Stessman, USD 450 Shawnee Heights

March 12, 2015

Senator Lynn and distinguished members of the commerce committee;

I respectfully offer my testimony in opposition to SB 212.

As a public school superintendent in the state of Kansas I am a member of my professional organization on a state and national level because one of the hallmarks of a thriving profession is a strong professional organization that contributes to the knowledge base and advancement of the field of the profession. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, all have professional organizations; as do realtors, nurses, accountants, social workers, and the list goes on.

Generally, conflict between labor or unions and management is unavoidable. There is always a top-down push from management that is universally met with bottom up resistance from labor. It is a pattern repeated across hierarchical organizations in a push/pull pattern of insistence and resistance. Typically management sees this resistance as laziness, apathy or lethargy while labor views the push down as a blind pursuit of profit at their expense. Neither side values the other.

Fifteen years ago I would have stood here as a proponent of this bill. Fifteen years ago I saw little need and had little use for the local teachers association. As a teacher I did not belong. As a principal I had no interaction with them. As a superintendent; however, I was forced to negotiate annually with them at the very least. In the beginning I entered into negotiations possessing all the answers regardless of the questions. After fifteen years and countless professional interactions I have learned three universal truths.

1. I can only be successful if they are successful.
2. All of us are smarter than any one of us.
3. Unless the general has information unavailable to others, those closest to the front always know better what is actually happening.

I now see the benefits of a strong professional association that works collaboratively with administrators and boards of education. We have found better solutions working together than would have been possible working in isolation. A strong teachers association makes us a better district.

We currently make payroll deductions and reductions for a host of insurance products including life, cancer and disability, unreimbursed medical expenses, childcare, dental insurance, professional dues, tax deferred accounts, credit union dues, and the United Way. These deductions are entered once at the beginning of the year by our payroll clerk. Most now are an electronic upload, the others take less than a few hours to enter manually. The cost to the district is negligible. The service to our staff members is invaluable and the benefit to the district is a collaborative environment of mutual respect.