



Garry Sigle Testimony
Kansas Association of American Educators (KANAAE)
Senate Commerce Committee
March 9, 2016
Senate Bill 469

Madam Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Garry Sigle. I am the executive director of the Kansas Association of American Educators (KANAAE). I am providing this information today to testify in support of the principles behind Senate Bill 469. My perspective also includes 33 years experience as a Kansas public school teacher and coach.

The Kansas Association of American Educators is a non-union teacher organization. It is a professional association that provides benefits and services to educators such as liability insurance and professional development. KANAAE is not a union and does not bargain contracts for teachers. Prior to becoming the executive director I was a member of KANAAE for the final 15 years of my teaching/coaching career at Riley County High School, Riley, Kansas. The first 18 years of my career I was a member of KNEA. I believe I bring a unique perspective to this committee concerning SB469 as someone who worked to free our district from KNEA ties and bargain for ourselves under a local-only association model.

This bill is all about teacher choice and transparency. A recent eye-opening survey of KANAAE members regarding union representation illustrates why legislation is needed to ensure that unions operate with democratic consent of employees. According to KANAAE members:

- 70% of surveyed members did not vote for a union to represent them.
- Of the small minority of teachers who have actually voted in a union certification election, just 16% thought the process was “confidential, transparent, and fair.”
- 64% of teachers surveyed would prefer to negotiate their own contract so that they could negotiate a salary and benefits package that best suits their lifestyle.

Under current law the unique needs of Kansas teachers are clearly not being taken into account. SB 469 would establish a system of safeguards similar to those that are provided in the vast majority of states throughout the country. The policy in this bill will address three challenges facing professional school employees including:

1. Ensuring fair, transparent union representation elections,
2. Giving school employees a chance to elect their negotiations representation in a manner that reflects the workforce at a given time, and
3. Allows educators to select from a variety of representation choices for negotiations.

In the fall of 2008 at Riley County, with only 13 of 56 certified staff as members of the union, none of which were teachers at the high school, we chose to pursue decertification. Our district was successful in

decertifying from KNEA. This process allowed all teachers in the district the ability to negotiate or be an officer in the local, no matter their professional membership.

Riley County isn't alone. Decertification is a trend in Kansas and we've seen several other districts in Kansas decertify via a similar process. Currently there are other districts considering this option.

The feedback from teachers and decertification trends in Kansas prove that many school employees have grown dissatisfied with the archaic practice of allowing a private organization unchecked power over an educator's livelihood. We must give all teachers the opportunity to voice their opinions and regularly choose an option that best meets their needs.

This legislation preserves and protects the fundamental right of employees to vote for an organization that can best meet the needs of themselves and their district. We urge you to consider SB 469 as a means to:

- Ensure that unions operate with the democratic consent of employees.
- Ensure that the board only negotiates with an exclusive representative duly chosen by a majority of professional school employees.
- Allow for employees to consider both the benefits and costs of joining a union and to make an informed choice without the potential for confronting threats or coercion.
- Gives employees greater control over their workplace representation and a means to hold the unions accountable to the needs of employees.
- Make it easier for employees to remove an unwanted union or to change to a different course thereby increasing accountability and competition in the provision of workplace representation services.
- Advance local control for both professional employees and the school district.
- Protect teachers' freedom of association and freedom of speech by not forcing them under the "exclusive bargaining" control of a union they do not wish to represent them if a majority votes against it.

As stated earlier, KANAAE is not a union and does not seek representation on a ballot for bargaining representative. As an organization seeking to elevate the professionalism of teachers, we believe SB 469 is a step in the right direction for teachers in Kansas. Education employees deserve the right to make informed choices.

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