

Testimony for Consideration by Kansas Senate Committee  
on Ways and Means

Re: SB176

Submitted February 22, 2015

Steve Roberts, Member, Kansas State Board of Education

This testimony addresses my own views on Senate Bill 176, an act concerning labor negotiations as it affects public school teachers in Kansas. These are my own views, and the opinions are my own; they may or may not be shared by other members of the board on which I am privileged to serve.

I support Senate Bill 176 and its provisions to give more local control to local school boards for their negotiations of contracts with teachers. The new language for professional service has the potential to help more professionals work in our public classrooms, and it is important that we have an effective educator in every classroom.

It would not be prudent for me to speak of the expansive legal codicils expunged by the bill. Education law is, to be sure, unwieldy. It appears that a great deal of law shall be simplified with this bill, and simplification of law is something that is sorely needed in education today. Without trying to sound flippant or cavalier, I wish you luck with that. Our statutes are, in general, too cumbersome.

I appreciate the reference in Section 8 to "bad faith" for prohibited practices; I appreciate the retention of existing law for protection of professional employees. I specifically appreciate the very good language in Section 8 (c)(2) that states that interference or coercion of a (local) board of education shall be prohibited for negotiations or adjustments of grievances.

For too long professional teachers have been treated as clerks, and the salary charts common to most public school districts confirm that bias that ultimately contributes to poorer schools having a more difficult time finding technical expertise, especially in the STEM courses (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). My engineering background and my years of experience in education permit me to wholeheartedly endorse the provisions of Senate Bill 176 that could facilitate more professionals working in our public schools.

Thank you.