



Kansas PTA

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Testimony to Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Honorable Chairperson, Senator Ralph Ostmeyer

Connie Burns, Committee Assistant 785-296-4335

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Hearing: Wednesday, February 11, 2015, 10:30 AM Room 144-S

Testimony Kansas PTA

SUPPORT of SB86– The Transparency Act

Chairman Ostmeyer and Committee Members,

Please accept this written testimony is strong support of The Transparency Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our position regarding this valuable bill being heard today in the Federal and State Affairs Committee.

Kansas PTA is testifying today in support of this bipartisan Transparency Act. Live audio streaming of meetings in selected statehouse committee rooms and archiving for later internet access would be a valuable tool for Kansas PTA members, particularly those who volunteer as legislative liaisons.

In the context of PTA, advocacy is defined as supporting and speaking up for children—in schools, in communities, and before government bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children. Kansas PTA members understand that state laws have a major impact on the potential role and defined purpose of K12 public education.

As a liaison for a PTA unit, these volunteers become familiar with the legislative issues and provide information on bills to unit members in relation to the PTA policy positions. However, the vast majority of our volunteers have full-time commitments to their professions, their families and their communities. Traveling to Topeka daily to hear and weigh in on discussions of critical bills is not feasible, nor realistic.

The Transparency Act makes effective use of existing technology to overcome this logistical obstacle in the name of effective communication and good government. Firsthand access to select committee meeting discussions and related testimony on bills is a step in the right direction. We are hopeful that the Senate Education Committee will be among the pilot rooms selected, allowing thousands of members statewide to hear deliberation on bills affecting K12 public education. K12 parents, patrons and educators would finally have capacity to make informed decisions and to engage in the legislative process of shaping state laws, funding and policy for the education and well-being of our children.

On behalf of the Kansas PTA, we strongly support The Transparency Act. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Tammy Bartels, Kansas PTA President

Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities.

Kansas PTA Platform,

Legislative Priority 1. Kansas PTA will support efforts to strengthen and improve the Kansas public school finance system, which includes legislation and policies that:

- a. uphold Kansas Constitutional obligations to make suitable provision for the finance of the Kansas public schools that is equitable for every child.
- b. restore recent state cuts to base state aid per pupil, back to levels comparable to those deemed suitable by the legislature - actual costs identified in research studies requested and authorized by the Kansas legislature (e.g., Legislative Post Audit 2006 Cost Study).
- c. pursue solutions to fully fund state and federal educational mandates, including the new uniform financial accounting and reporting act, without disproportionately shifting the burden to local communities.

Legislative Priority 2. Kansas PTA will support efforts to restore an equitable and balanced tax policy to maintain a reliable revenue stream for public education. A policy which draws upon a combination of income, property and sales taxes has been proven by history to be a secure and sustainable approach. Kansas PTA opposes provisions limiting the growth of government before public education is fully funded to the statutory levels..

National PTA believes home schools and other nonpublic schools should meet the same educational standards as public schools.

Tammy Bartels
Kansas PTA President