

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Michael R. O'Neal at 3:30 p.m. on February 11, 1997 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Clay Aurand - Excused

Committee staff present: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department  
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
Cindy Wulfkuhle, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Bob Minchew - U.S.D. 424 - Mullinville  
Paul Conner - U.S.D. 474 - Haviland  
Dr. David Self - U.S.D. 300 - Coldwater  
Deloyce McKee - Director, KiCom Special Services Cooperative  
Mark Tallman - Kansas Association of School Boards  
Neil Marshall - Student at Valley Center High School  
Chris Clemence - Student at Valley Center High School  
Brilla Scott - United School Administrators of Kansas  
Helen Stephens - Kansas Peace Officers & Sheriffs Association

Others attending:



Hearings on **HB 2112 - Special education services, termination of agreements by school districts for provision of such services,** were opened.

Bob Minchew, U.S.D. 424 - Mullinville, appeared before the committee as a proponent. He explained that this bill would allow a two-thirds vote for termination of cooperatives and interlocals, and must be approved by the State Board of Education. Currently, it takes only one member voting against a change to put a stop to it. (Attachment 1)

Paul Conner, U.S.D. 474 - Haviland, appeared before the committee as a proponent. He believes that this bill would allow school districts to better serve the educational needs of communities and students. (Attachment 2)

Deloyce McKee, KiCom Special Services Cooperative, appeared before the committee in support of the bill. She stated that the 2/3 change is adequate to effect change of the constitution and would allow flexibility for governance of schools. She suggested that the bill be made effective upon publication in the Kansas Register. (Attachment 3)

Dr. David Self, U.S.D. 300 - Coldwater, appeared before the committee as an opponent.. He believes that the current process protects the rights of minorities. It also provides stability for students with special education needs. (Attachment 4)

Hearings on **HB 2112** were closed.

Hearings on **HB 2092 - Compulsory attendance age of children,** were opened.

Representative Tanner appeared before the committee as the sponsor of the bill. He requested that this bill be introduced because it seeks to protect the learning environment in the classroom by allowing those who do not want to be there to leave school. (Attachment 5)

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards, appeared before the committee as a proponent of the bill. He believes that the compulsory attendance bill which was passed last year would have little impact on students who drop out of school. (Attachment 6)

Neil Marshall, Student at Valley Center High School, appeared before the committee in support of the bill. He believes that requiring students to attend school until they are age 18 would cause problems in the

classroom. There are some students who feel that they do not need to go to school and these are the people who will be low to semi-skilled workers. (Attachment 7)

Chris Clemence, Student at Valley Center High School, appeared before the committee as a proponent. He stated that school is not for everyone and that there are many important people who did not finish high school. Allowing students to leave school at the age of 16 would release unwilling and troublesome students from the school system. (Attachment 8)

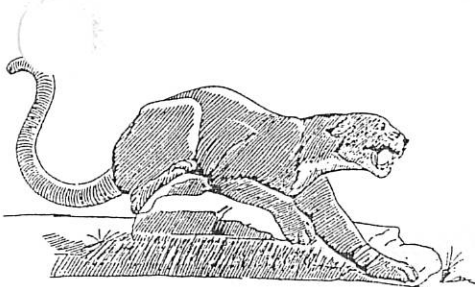
Brilla Scott, United School Administrators of Kansas, appeared as a neutral party to the bill. She urged the committee to have alternative education programs in each school district to help the students who drop-out of school to finish their education. (Attachment 9)

Helen Stephens, Kansas Peace Officers & Sheriffs Association, appeared before the committee in support of the bill. The Legislature needs to either support parents who are trying to keep their children in school or don't send the message to students that it is okay to quit at 16. (Attachment 10)

Hearings on **HB 2092** were closed.

Representative Tanner made a motion to approve the committee minutes from January 27, 28 & 29. Representative Horst seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Committee meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for February 12, 1997.



MULLINVILLE U.S.D. 424

Mullinville, Kansas 67109

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**Testimony  
House Bill 2112  
February 11, 1997**

**Reference KSA 72-968 & 72-8230**

**Presented to the House of Representatives Education Committee**

Chairman Mike O'Neal and member of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony concerning House Bill 2112.

The referenced statutes have been interpreted by some to mean that any change in governance structure requires a unanimous vote of the member districts. This makes it almost impossible to cause changes that can help provide and maintain quality programs for children while decreasing and/or flattening ever increasing costs.

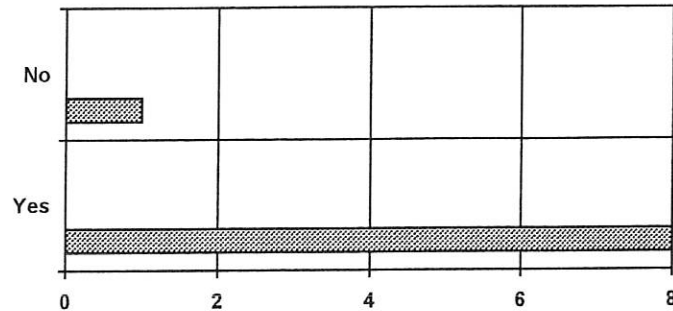
In the case of Cooperatives, sponsoring districts have an "unfair" amount of liability in the management of special education organizations. Efforts to change to an interlocal arrangement can meet much resistance because of fear of loss of control.

Sponsoring district negotiations impacts the cost to member districts with different salary structures, benefits and number of contract days. Member districts desiring changes in contractual agreements have much difficulty with the unanimous vote provision.

Attempts to change in our area has met much resistance. One USD in nine rejected the efforts to merge two small cooperatives together last year. A year's work in comparing and developing a budget for the new cooperative was nullified by the vote of four board members of one district.

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Attachment 1

### Form new Sunflower Special Services Cooperative



Eight districts voted for the merger (56 board members)

One district voted against the merger (a 4/3 vote)

This minority controlled the destiny of two special education cooperatives with nine districts represented.

As this graph shows the majority did not determine what would happen for the children of Ki-Com and Tri-County Special Education Cooperatives.

If the statute is changed and a two-thirds vote is allowed for termination of cooperatives and interlocals, the proposal must still pass the requirement of the Kansas State Board of Education. These guidelines stipulate that there shall be no increase in costs and no decrease of services.

Efforts to change the local Cooperative have followed these guidelines. The situation graphed above provided the same services for children as was being provided. The costs for all districts was to be leveled for 3-5 years. A slight increase had been built into the plan to cover anticipated cost increases through growth. Staff were assured of jobs with no loss in pay or benefits for at least the first year. The idea of merging two small cooperatives into one larger was to help spread the cost of special education over a broader base. In this way no one school or cooperative would have to take the hit of significant increases due to an unexpected influx of high cost students.



Another effort to reorganize is underway. The options are to join another Special Education provider which is an interlocal or reorganize as an interlocal among ourselves. An interlocal offers advantages that address some of our concerns. It removes the liability from one district (Sponsoring district) and places it with the interlocal. The interlocal operates as a separate entity. It is just like another school district in many ways. Negotiated agreements of member districts have no bearing on the interlocal. The everyday operations are under the control of the governing board of the interlocal rather than the sponsoring district's board of education. This reorganization effort has every intention of providing services to all member districts. Each existing member will have the option to be a participating member of the new interlocal; purchase services from the new interlocal; or seek membership in other special education provider organizations.

With the restrictions placed on district's budgets, superintendents and boards of education are trying to be creative in managing funds and controlling expenditures. One strategy is to control costs for special education services. Wise management by some special education provider organizations over the years has helped to keep costs under control. But small special education organizations must provide the full range of services to children and many of these come at a high cost. Speech Pathologists are difficult to find and costly to employ. More restrictive placements are becoming common and include higher than average costs. Physical Therapy services are becoming more a part of Individual Education Plans and are also costly services. All of us realize we can get into these high cost situations at any time and are looking for ways to spread that cost over a broad base.

Reasons given by one district in our cooperative to oppose restructuring:

- \* A fear of losing control and not being able to provide needed services for their geographically isolated district;

- \* Personalities involved in districts with which a merger was attempted;

- \* Staff fear of change and pressure on key board members to resist any attempt to change;

- \* Distance that some staff would have to travel with additional districts involved in merger;

\* Fear that other cooperative involved in the merger was not providing the quality of service comparable to ours;

\* Fear that the new sponsoring district would veto efforts of the majority.

I ask that you imagine for a moment that you have to operate under the restriction of having to get a unanimous vote to affect change for the citizens and children of Kansas. If you can imagine this, you can understand the frustrations we are having with this effort in our cooperative.

Thank you for your time and consideration of making this change.

Robert E. Minchew  
Superintendent

February 11, 1997

To: The Honorable Chairman Mike O'Neal and Honorable Education Committee Members.  
Fr: Paul E. Conner, Superintendent of Schools, USD 474, Haviland  
Re: HB 2112

We have an opportunity to add language to HB 2112 that would enhance the operation and control of cooperatives and interlocals by and between school districts. This is a good bill that will allow school districts to better serve the educational needs of communities and students across our great state. The addition of minimum language allowing decisions to be made with a 2/3 vote would resolve many issues that face our schools as we strive to offer appropriate, responsible education to students.

HB 2112 still maintains oversight and final approval outside the districts involved in the various cooperatives and interlocals. The original intent and integrity of the bill is maintained. With this in mind, we respectfully request that you give consideration to the minor changes that will retain the bill's integrity and at the same time enable districts to resolve issues in a reasonable manner and allow us more time to focus on students instead of issues. We yield to your wisdom and experience and ask that you consider carefully and vote your conviction on HB 2112.

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Attachment 2

**Testimony In support of HB 2112**

**Deloyce (Dee) McKee**

**Reference to KSA 72-968 & 72-8230**

**2-11-97**

Chairman O'Neal and Members of House Education Committee,  
In the interest of representative fairness and functionality, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2112.

In 1994, An administrative effort to restructure two smaller special educational cooperatives; KiCom Sp Ed Cooperative (representing Kiowa and Comanche county) and Tri County Cooperative (which includes Edwards, Pawnee and part of Hodgeman Counties) was initiated. This effort came after previous efforts had been expended studying other possible opportunities to spread operational costs by expanding the 'assessment base' for operation of both cooperatives. . Following two years of data and document rebuilding, the nine districts made the initial attempt to unify by taking the required petitions to each of their boards. One petition by each school district had to be approved to discontinue current services , the other petition was to unite into a single new organization. Cost were projected to stabilize, while the diverse talents of the staff would strengthen the educational program for the children. The elected board members of eight of the nine schools who were considering the proposal voted IN FAVOR of realigning the operational systems for reasons of efficiency, functionality, and long range benefits.

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Attachment 3



Though the benefits proposed by the planning team were evaluated by each school district based on different perspectives and assumptions. It was the long term goal of the schools participating to stabilize assessments and maintain quality programs in the face of legal requirements of educating all children.

Why would the majority not be able to effect a desired change in local governance of their school?

Under the current law governing educational cooperatives, the cooperative agreements were locked in place by the action of the Kansas Legislature in a attempt at holding large an small groups in their existing groups. This decision unfortunately bypassed provisions within the local cooperative agreements that allowed and required three year revisiting of the terms of these agreements.

The existing language requires that ALL participants must agree to terms of a change..... which in effect allows the smallest minority of four members of any one board to control the operation of a cooperative, which is what basically occurred in the spring of 1996 when the restructure effort occurred.

In reviewing studies of successful interlocal and multi district cooperative structures, research and history has shown that when the cooperating, contributing party in an group that has banded together to provide a needed service, feels that their input has value and weight, and that their position is respected in the decision making process, that those cooperative efforts move forward and flourish. Absent that mutual representation and voice, the governance structure soon becomes dysfunctional and will soon fail.

It is this circumstance that brings the need for HB 2112, which allow 2/3 of the vote of the members to change and modify the agreement providing for the cooperative operation and administration in providing special education services for exceptional children. This change is functionally reasonable to allow local school s to determine their long range management direction. This change will be, as it is now, reviewed by a hearing of the state board and is subject to their final approval. This change and it's 2/3 level of agreement is adequate to effect change of the constitution.... and will be adequate to allow flexibility for governance of our schools.

There are two specific changes in wording of the bill, that I would suggest ..... Line 33, should read “changed or modified by 2/3 consent of the contracting school districts.” This to be synch with the other changes to 2/3 agreement .

I would also ask that the final line on page 5.... line 40 and 41, “Section 4. This act shall take effect and be in force upon the signature of the governor.

If I can provide additional data or understanding, I would be happy to answer questions.

Dee McKee

Director- KiCom Special Services Cooperative

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# COMANCHE COUNTY U.S.D. 300 COLDWATER, KANSAS

David Self, Superintendent

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February 11, 1997

House Education Committee  
Hearing on H.B. 2112  
Room 519S, State House  
Topeka, Kansas

### General Remarks for the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the governance process for the great State of Kansas. I am David M. Self, Superintendent of Comanche County Unified School District 300. I serve the communities of Wilmore, Coldwater, and Protection. We are located in Comanche County with our southern boundary touching that portion of Oklahoma just above the area where their panhandle attaches to the main body of the state.

As you deliberate the proposed language change in H.B. 2112, and how special education cooperative agreements are regulated, the Board of Education of Comanche County USD 300 would greatly appreciate your consideration for the minority opinion. We believe that the current language is still good public policy and would ask you not to change the statute as it is now written.

USD 300 is currently the sponsoring district for the Ki Com Special Education Cooperative. A merger with another group of schools has been an "on-again" "off-again" topic of discussion over the past few years. Ki Com is bordered on the west by a large cooperative which includes Dodge City, on the north by Tri-County Special Services of Larned, and South Central Kansas Educational Cooperative with its office in Iuka to our east. Three years ago, interest in Ki Com generated discussions with Dodge City and SCKEC seeking their level of interest in merging. At that time more local preference was present for an SCKEC connection. Conditions were not favorable and neither of the two voiced interests in merging. Last year Ki Com and Tri County began discussions that amazingly grew to the point where all district boards were asked to vote on a resolution to merge. It was after long discussion and considerable thought that the USD 300 Board decided to cast its lone "no" vote. That single vote did act as a veto among the nine schools involved and it did stop the merging process. The USD 300 board believed the merger to be ill advised and thus voted against the proposal.

Merger conversations supported the idea that services for all members would remain at the same level. The sponsorship for the new cooperative was going to be vested in the largest school district in the far north end of the geographical area of the new cooperative. Instead of supporting two directors, the recommendation was to utilize only one as part of a savings proposal. Ki Com was bringing approximately \$250,000 in useable cash carryover in comparison to \$30,000 by Tri-County. The decentralization usually experienced with a larger bureaucracy left an impression of less service for USD 300's exceptional children. Also, the resulting larger service area manifested feelings of increased geographical isolation. The geographical orientation did not make a comfortable fit for many of USD 300's employees, patrons, and board members.

We would ask you to give some consideration to the unique geography involved in this proposal. It has never been the intent of the other three districts to leave the dissenting district without services. However, we believe that USD 300's location in reality create problems in providing same level services. Mullinville (424), Greensburg (422), and Haviland (474) all lay along the same east-west highway that carries a large volume of traffic. This creates an economic development corridor in comparison to the vast areas of grass land which comprises our farming and ranching economy in Comanche County. USD 300 is located 27 miles to the south of this east-west corridor in an isolated agribusiness area bordered on the south by the Oklahoma state line. If the language is changed, the other three districts may choose to merge in a direction that re-enforces the geographical isolation of USD 300.

FEB-17-97 MON 12:15 PM

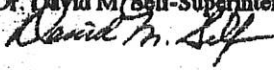
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An Equal Employment/Educational Opportunity Agency

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P. 2  
Attachment 4

It is difficult for the Board of USD 300 to be opposed to the democratic principle that "votes by two thirds majority should constitute legal, binding actions." However, many great debates resulting in eventual legislation have historically provided state and national avenues of consideration for a minority opinion. We believe this to be the case in the current wording in KSA 72-968. The recommended language, as proposed in H.B. 2112, changes the protection offered for some apparently reasonable and historical reasons. The Board of USD 300 encourages you to recommend the language to stand. We respectfully request your no vote on passage of this measure.

Yours in education,  
USD 300 Board of Education  
Mr. Charles Peterson, President  
Dr. David M. Self-Superintendent



# STATE OF KANSAS



THE CAPITOL

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

RALPH M. TANNER  
DISTRICT 10

TESTIMONY – HB 2092

Committee on Education

### COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

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VICE CHAIR	GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION & ELECTIONS
MEMBER	EDUCATION INSURANCE JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD NATURAL AND SCIENTIFIC AREAS

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this bill as a recommendation of the Interim Committee on School Finance. That interim committee examined the basis for its recommendation, and I offered a successful motion at that time to bring this issue to the Committee on Education. I believe Senator Lawrence has already brought the matter to the attention of the Senate Committee on Education.

This is really not a matter which goes to the protection of the interests of any child in the educational structure of the state. This is an issue that seeks to protect the learning environment in a classroom setting. Any student who wishes to be in school may do so regardless of whether or not there is a compulsory attendance law requiring him or her to attend school until a given moment in time, or until graduation has occurred.

It seems to me – and indeed to the summer committee – that students who do not wish to be in class, but are there because of some compulsory age law, will not contribute to the academic tone of the place. The chances are that theirs will be a disruptive mode of behavior. Teachers have enough difficulty maintaining an orderly learning environment without potentially disruptive behavior from an out-of-sorts youngster.

It is undoubtedly true that the judiciary committee, last year, believed that the overall good of young people would be served by keeping them in school until age 18, or graduation. Such is not necessarily the case.

The history of compulsory attendance law in this country did not develop as a protective measure for children. The history of this phenomenon teaches us that the movement was a device to protect organized labor from what was seen as unfair competition for jobs from youngsters.

A simple way of putting this matter is to say that schools do not need the problem of 16-18 year-olds who wish to be elsewhere.

House Education  
2-11-97  
Attachment 5





TO: House Committee on Education  
FROM: Mark Tallman, Director of Governmental Relations  
DATE: February 11, 1997  
  
**RE: Testimony on H.B. 2092**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

KASB does not have a specific policy position on the issue the compulsory attendance age. However, we appear today in support of H.B. 2092 because we believe that the compulsory attendance provisions passed last session as part of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act will have little, if any, positive impact on education students who currently drop out of school, and will potentially have a negative impact on the education of the rest of our student population.

The reason is simple: it is far more difficult to educate children who do not wish to be in school than those who do. Passing a law requiring 17- and 18-year-olds to be in school does nothing to change their attitude. These students are more likely to be disruptive or require more attention from teachers, both of which infringe on the quality of education for other students.

If the Legislature wishes to make the public policy decision that high school drop-outs must be served, it must also provide districts with the resources to take on this addition responsibility with programs designed to meet the special challenges these students pose. At the same time, it must recognize that many educators are deeply frustrated with their current inability to enforce compulsory attendance laws already on the books. Adding to the reporting burden of schools for a mandate which is not going to be enforced anyway makes no sense.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Attachment 6

11 February, 1996  
Neil T. Marshall

I think that students should not be required to attend high school until they are eighteen years old.

I would contend that students who are forced to stay in school become a disruption. Already, at schools where no detention or In School Suspension (ISS) room exists, students who do not care to be learning and who would rather be a disruption take time and focus away from other dedicated students. Moreover, the "problem" students tend to lead the disruption of the class. Their presence encourages other similar, but less daring, students to engage in mischievous behavior. The students who are truly in the classroom to learn are left to their own means while the teacher engages the problem students on an individual basis. Such a method of resolving classroom complications benefits no one and wastes the time of all parties involved.

I would further contend that students who are left to stagnate in the school systems until they are eighteen years old will be more likely to exit school and not attempt to graduate. Currently, many students whom I know are willing to return to school or earn their GEDs. This motivation comes from these students realizing that the life they had perceived as being better than school was really a great deal worse. Long hours, minimum wage and little respect drives these students back into the classroom or to GED study centers. A student who is eighteen and who truly does not want to finish school will probably not realize these downfalls until he or she is already into the work force. Once the student has a steady job and is seen as an adult, he or she will feel awkward to return to school or to take the GED test. One student at my high school returned a two years after his classmates graduated and didn't even last nine weeks, assuredly because of his immense pride.

Finally, I would contend that some students simply do not need to go to school. These students are the future low- to semi-skilled workers who will not benefit from a high school education. My brother, for instance, took advantage of a high school work program and left the campus his senior year to work. He worked for a computer repair company which served as a pipeline to send him to his current job, in which he is making a substantial amount of money working with computer networks. Thankfully, he did not drop out due to the flexibility of my school. Had he not had those options, he probably would not have acquired his new job and had so much success.

For all of the reasons I have described above, I firmly believe that students should not have to attend school until they are eighteen years old.

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Attachment 7

## House Bill #2092

Chinese finger cuffs are interesting toys. Once slipped over the fingers, they resist force in one direction by exerting equal force in the opposite direction. Unfortunately, in today's schools, some students tend to react in the same fashion. Urged to go in one direction, these students will resist mightily by pulling in an opposite direction. We need to stop vainly struggling against students who do nothing but counteract the force of traditional education.

School in the traditional sense is not for everyone. Our great nation is replete with success stories of men and women who "made it" without a high school diploma. News anchor Peter Jennings, poet Rod McKuen, Wendy's founder Dave Thomas, country singer Randy Travis and political analyst John Chancellor became successful without the benefit of a high school diploma. Jobs are available for those without a high school diploma, and the G.E.D. exists for those who decide to complete their formal education.

No one can be forced to learn. Requiring students to remain in school until the eighteenth birthday is telling teachers that they must teach unresponsive and frequently antagonistic students often at the expense of those who wish to learn. Attempting to teach those who do not wish to learn also costs valuable time and money, both of which can be used to the benefit of receptive students.

In conclusion, unwilling students should not be forced to remain past a reasonable age. The educational establishment should no longer be liable for unresponsive students. Traditional schooling is not necessarily a requirement for success, nor can it be reasonably imposed upon unwilling students. Only by being granted the freedom to explore can some truly discover the full potential that they possess.

- Chris Clemence, Student  
USD 262  
February 11, 1997

## Position Statement on H.B. 2092

- We believe that the compulsory attendance age should be returned to sixteen from eighteen because this would release unwilling and troublesome students from the school system, thereby facilitating the learning of truly receptive students through calmer classrooms and greater available time and capital.

House Education  
2-11-97  
Attachment 8





## **HB 2092: COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE**

Testimony presented before the House Education Committee

by

Brilla Highfill Scott, Associate Executive Director  
United School Administrators of Kansas

February 11, 1997

### **Mister Chairman and Members of the House Education Committee:**

United School Administrators of Kansas appreciates the opportunity to speak as an interested neutral party on the compulsory attendance age issue.

School administrators across our state understand the necessity for students to complete their high school education. Educators continue to focus on improving graduation rates as evidenced by district reports generated for the Kansas Report Card.

I made a number of calls last week to get reactions from administrators on this topic. One group indicated, "We want students to finish high school, but our court system and Social Rehabilitation Services cannot process the truancies we have now. These students need an alternative program that we are unable to provide." These comments came primarily from the smaller school districts.

Another group indicated, "This is not a big problem for our district. We have alternative high schools and feel most students are completing their high school education." Administrators from larger school districts made these comments.

The concern from both groups is about the student who does not want to be in school and creates disruptions.

Within the past few weeks, I had the opportunity to listen to a panel of students from the Lawrence Alternative High School. They were not staying in school because of the compulsory attendance law. They are staying in school because they found a program that meets their needs – the students feel someone cares about them as individuals. Class sizes are smaller and self-paced. These students are extremely proud of their school.

Students of this age need to take responsibility for their education. Alternative education programs should be developed and funded in every school district or regional service center area.

House Education  
2-11-97  
Attachment 9

**KANSAS PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**  
and  
**KANSAS SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION**

House Education Committee  
House Bill No. 2092  
February 11, 1997

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Helen Stephens, representing the Kansas Peace Officers Association and Kansas Sheriffs Association.

The associations I represent supported passage of the compulsory age attendance law as it was passed in 1996 as part of a bigger package that would put more responsibility on juveniles and their parents. We believed then, as we do now, that it was a major step forward that was long overdue. We believe the legislature would be irresponsible to parents and would be sending the wrong message to students to lower the compulsory attendance age back to 16 -- especially since it has not even taken effect.

During the past five years at least, legislators have repeatedly stated they want parents and children to be more responsible for their actions, and that parents should be more involved in their student's academic lives. Current law helps to accomplish that by requiring the parents' approval to dropout of school at age 16.

The legislature as a whole has balked during this same five years at least, at putting more money in juvenile programs or at-risk programs for our youth in trouble or in danger of dropping out. Putting the age back to 16 does not allow parents to be responsible, inadvertently puts more "power" into the hands of the student, and will just force the legislature to put more money into juvenile offender programs in coming years.

Just as now, young adults flaunt the lenient juvenile laws at law enforcement, they will flaunt to their parents that reaching 16 is a time when they can drive and dropout of school. Although some 16-year olds may look and act quite mature one moment, they can act just as immature the next; and either way, a majority still do not have a grasp on the consequences of this act of dropping out. I have heard legislators say it is the 16-year-olds decision and we shouldn't force them to stay in school -- one of my LEO likened dropping out of school to jumping off a bridge -- just taking their chances. No one in this room would allow a 16-year-old to jump off any bridge or cliff - why let them quit school at 16?

For parents, you are taking away an important support tool to keep their student in school. A parent can demand attendance at school, they can threaten and cajole; but when the law says a student may quit at 16 -- the parent's authority and leverage has been undermined.

Law enforcement understands the difficulties these students can present to teachers and school districts -- but allowing them to quit school is not the answer. The legislature and school districts have sufficient time to prepare for this change.

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Attachment 10



The answer lies in several areas: First, leave the law at 18 (16 with parental consent). Change is never easy, but we believe this is an important change for the future of Kansas students as they turn into adults. Give this law at least 5 years to change a lifetime of irrational and wrong thinking. Second, and foremost, give additional funding for at-risk students, additional funding for alternative schools, and/or allow more latitude for schools to handle these children. One suggestion -- relieve alternative schools of some of the rules and regulations and let the school boards and teachers use the innovative ideas that are out in their communities. Eliminating some of the rules and regs might also allow schools to operate several alternative schools on different levels.

We urge one of two actions for SB 38 -- table the bill or report it unfavorably -- support parents who are trying to keep their student in school, do not send the message to students that it is okay to quit at 16, and do more in other areas to help Kansas schools handle the students who want to quit.

I thank you for this opportunity and I would be happy to answer your questions.

10-2  
~~9-2~~