

OPPOSITION TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING ON SB 155

My name is Chuck Stockton and I am the superintendent of schools for USD 506 – Labette County. I stand before you this morning with the intent to explain my opposition to Senate Bill 155 and the reasons for my opposition on behalf of the USD 506 Board of Education, duly elected to represent the interest of USD 506 – Labette County residents.

Let me begin by calling your attention to the exhibit marked “A – Map of Labette County Public School District Boundaries.” If I may, please direct your attention to the upper right hand corner of the map, which details the north east corner of Labette County. Members of the committee will see the area called North shaded in a light purple color. This area indicates the territory and boundaries of USD 503 Parsons.

Moving down along the right edge of the map, the area called Montana shaded in what I will call light gray, indicates the territory and boundaries of USD 504 – Oswego. Continuing down the right edge of the map you will see the area shaded in a darker gray that is in the southeast corner of Labette County. This area indicates the Labette County territory and boundaries of USD 505 – Chetopa/St. Paul. Members of the committee may also recall that the recent consolidation of Chetopa and St. Paul resulted in a district, Chetopa/St. Paul, with territory in Labette County and Neosho County that are not contiguous. Again, drawing your attention to the map marked Exhibit A, having shown committee members the territory and boundaries of USD 503, 504, and 505, the remaining 500 square miles of Labette County are now what constitutes USD 506 – Labette County, which was established in its current form through consolidation in 1968.

If I may, I would now like to direct your attention to exhibit B – Map of Great Plains Industrial Park, formerly known as the Kansas Army Ammunition Plant. At the root of Senate Bill 155 is the area shaded in a light blue and labeled Kansas Army Ammunition Plant. Committee members will recall previous testimony this morning indicating the genesis of the current Labette County Public School district boundary lines. Perhaps in your consideration of the bill before you today, committee members will conclude as I have, in the simplest of terms:

- 1) The Kansas Army Ammunition Plan was exempted from tax rolls because it was federal property
- 2) When federal property has returned to private ownership, properties fall back into the various taxing entities in which they physically sit. We cannot, or at least we should not, pass a law that pretends otherwise.

Further, if committee members would recall previous testimony this morning, you were also briefed on similar examples of federal properties that have been, or could be privatized. In the case of those that have been returned to private ownership, such the Schilling Air Force Base in Saline county, and the Sunflower Ammunition Plant that sits in Johnson county, committee members should consider that in neither case has the assessed valuation of these properties been divided among taxing entities in which the property does not sit. To do otherwise, as proposed in Senate Bill 155, sets a new precedent and what I believe to be undesirable unintended consequences as exemplified previously by Mr. Jerry Minneman, USD 307 superintendent.

Recall Mr. Minneman's example of an unintended consequence set by the passage of Senate bill 155 should the Smoky Hill Air National Guard Range, located in Saline and McPherson counties, be closed by the department of defense. With the passage of Senate Bill 155, the flood gates are opened for taxing entities, desperate to secure additional funds, to request similar legislation targeting highly valued properties within other taxing entities boundaries. Perhaps most distressing to the USD 506 constituency, is that all of this can happen without forewarning or the prior agreement of the taxing entity to whom belongs the property's assessed value and corresponding tax dollars, as in the case for USD 506. As you have heard this morning already, the Board of Education, nor I were aware of this bill until it had already been heard and passed out of the Senate Education committee. Only today, have we had the opportunity to provide input regarding Senate Bill 155.

Let me close by asking you to do four things:

- 1) Don't be taken in by the ruse that no one loses by the passage of Senate Bill 155. Clearly USD 506 and others sure to follow, lose tax dollars by allowing taxing entities to benefit from property's assessed valuation outside their own taxing boundaries;
- 2) Recognize the benefit to all Labette County communities provided by the future development of the Great Plains Industrial Park in the form of jobs, housing and student enrollment without the need to benefit disproportionately from a tax base outside our own taxing boundaries as provided by the passage of Senate Bill 155;
- 3) Realize that no Labette County school district has contributed financially or any in-kind contribution to the Great Plains Development Authority thus having no claim or expectation of tax receipts except as provide by law having said property within their legally established property and taxing boundaries; and finally,

- 4) Please take no action on Senate Bill 155, as KSA 72-7108 provides a mechanism for distributing assessed valuation and associated property taxes through the transfer of property “*Upon the written agreement of any two boards approved by the state board of education.*”

I thank you for your time and patience today and would stand for any questions during the appropriate time.

Chuck Stockton, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
USD 506 Labette County
P.O. Box 189
Altamont, KS 67330

(620) 784-5326
cstockton@usd506.org

Exhibit A – Map of Labette County Public School District Boundaries

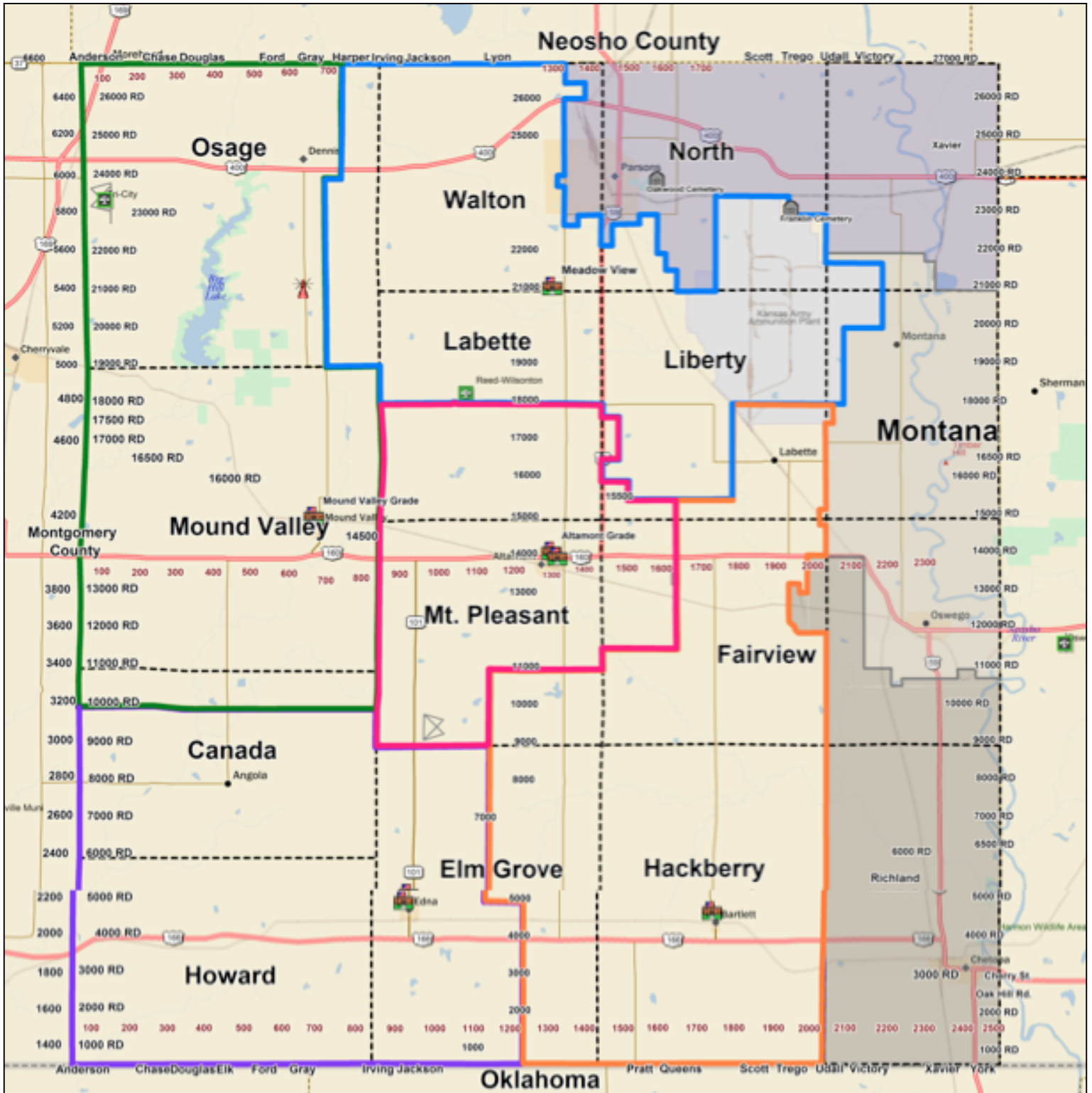


Exhibit B – Map of Great Plains Industrial Park (Kansas Army Ammunition Plant)

