

Greg Smith
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Chairman Kleeb, Vice Chairman Sullentrop, Ranking Member Frownfelter, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to briefly explain my views on HB 2023.

Even though I am a member of the Kansas Legislature I am not testifying today in that capacity. I am a public school teacher in the state of Kansas and it is in that capacity that I offer these comments today. I teach U.S. History and American Government at the high school level. I am proud that I am a teacher. I come from a family of educators. My father taught at the same school I now teach at for 40 years. I graduated from the school I now teach at. All five of my children have attended the school I teach at. Three have graduated and two are currently students. One is a senior this year and one is a junior. I believe that teaching is a noble profession and that teachers are charged with training the next generation of citizens.

I have no animosity toward administrators, public education, students or teachers. I do not, however support, nor do I believe, that those in the public sector should be allowed to unionize. I am not a member of the teacher's union, yet that organization bargains for my pay, benefits and working conditions. I have no voice in the matter. My interests and needs are not a part of the equation. I refuse to have the money that I work for taken from me to support an organization that does not support me.

Six years ago when I started teaching after a career in law enforcement, I was approached at the new hire breakfast by a member of the teacher's union. They were recruiting new members. I was handed a clipboard, asked to fill out the information/registration card, and told that my dues would be automatically taken from my paycheck each month. When I asked what the dues were, I was told they were \$65. When I asked what I received in return for that money I was told it covered my liability insurance. When I asked what else it provided I was told about reductions in car rental rates, hotel rates, and other consumer savings programs. When I asked what else the money was used for I was told insurance. I declined and handed the clipboard back.

Paycheck protection laws prohibit public employee labor organizations, such as teacher unions, from using the dues of their members for political contributions without the consent of their employees. This ensures that all political activity conducted by the union is approved by its members, protecting their basic rights of association. This bill will help to put money back into the pockets of teachers, allowing them the choice as to whether or not they wish to donate to union-sponsored political activity.

Most teachers that I associate with have no deep seated belief in the union or its political agenda. Some don't know that the union has a political agenda and others ignore it because they don't support it but feel pressured to be part of the union. The teachers union has a history of passing resolutions condemning school vouchers, homeschooling, and competency testing for teachers. All of these would be in the best interest of students.

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They have passed other resolutions that have had nothing to do with the classroom including pro-choice legislation. Over 93% of teacher union campaign donations are given to liberal candidates. I do not support liberal policies which is why I do not belong to the union. Financial disclosure records of the union also show that the leadership of this organization is paid pricy salaries, funded by teachers' dues. Over 300 union officials have six figure salaries.

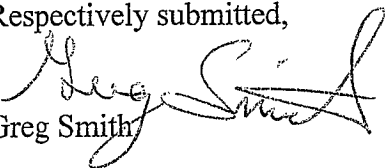
A report from the Heritage Foundation shows that paycheck protection legislation has a clear negative effect on public sector union political contributions. Union campaign donations decreased by approximately 50%. These statistics are hard to negate. When given the choice to donate to union-sponsored political activity, much fewer people chose to funnel this money to the union's political arm showing that many unions are forcing dues-paying members to contribute to causes with which they do not necessarily agree. Many teachers join for the insurance and not for the politics.

I am not a union member and I have insurance. Twice the coverage offered by the union for a third of the price and no money used to lobby in D.C. or Topeka for a political agenda I don't agree with.

Teachers face intense pressure to join the union. I am here to testify today because every one of my colleagues that I spoke with about this legislation expressed approval of it. When asked if they would come and relate their story about the union the first question was would any union representatives be present? When they found out they most likely would be every one of them declined to testify in committee because they did not want to be targeted by union members at work. That is a testament to the power of the union in a right to work state.

I ask that the committee report this bill favorable for passage.

Respectively submitted,


Greg Smith