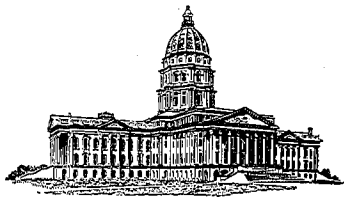


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Thank you madam chair and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak as a proponent of HB 2280 that would establish a Celebrate Freedom Week across the state.

What is Freedom Week?

It is a week set aside to learn about our nation's founding, the historical documents and the people that made it possible. It also is a time to celebrate our veterans that have helped preserve our freedoms and liberties. It is a collaborative time that extends to our local communities to assist in the planning and executing the week's activities. Let me give you an example of the type of activities through a personal experience of my own. When I was a math paraprofessional at Leawood Elementary, they would have a Veteran's Day celebration. It started by individual students creating a star for their loved one either past or present that served in any branch of the military. Those stars were then placed around the school as a reminder of the service of those individuals. Many of the classes wrote letters to the military during the week. On the designated day of honor, the veterans were treated to a breakfast, were guests in classrooms for a question and answer time and finally an all school assembly that included the choir singing several patriotic songs, a trumpeter playing the taps and honorary speakers, such as Congressman Dennis Moore. It was a very moving experience and there was usually not a dry eye in the audience. At the conclusion, the children presented their star to a family member. These were just a few of the activities that the school participated in during the week. In a handout in my testimony is another example how several schools in Oklahoma are celebrating freedom week. This article was written by Sandy, who is the state superintendent of public instruction.

Why should we have a Freedom Week?

Our system of government is dependent upon well informed and active citizens. According to Newsweek magazine only 38% of Americans passed the U.S citizenship test. The U.S. citizenship test is administered to all immigrants applying for citizenship. It is comprised of 100 questions across five categories - American government, systems of government, rights and

responsibilities, American history and integrated civics. An established freedom week would help fill in the gaps for students, parents and the community.

Here are some statistics from the *National Constitutional Center's* website. From a survey that they conducted they found the following:

- Only 6% can name all four rights guaranteed by the first Amendment. (24% cannot name even one. 27% can only name one. 43% can name two or three.)
- 62% cannot name all three branches of the Federal government.
- 35% believe that the Constitution mandates English as the official language.
- 7% can correctly identify the Constitutional Convention as the authors.
- 4 in 5 do not know how many amendments there are to the Constitution.
- 1 in 5 do not know that the President is Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- 84% believe that the U.S. Constitution is the document that states that "all men are created equal", thus confusing it with the Declaration of Independence.

I was one of those people that did not either know or remember much about our founding documents. Three years ago, I brought my daughter up to the Capitol to page. I was contemplating a run for state representative at the time and a senator asked me if I was pro 2nd Amendment. I am ashamed to admit that I did not remember what that amendment was and had to ask to find out. I believe that establishing a Freedom Week would bring more attention to this through PTA's and other organizations getting involved in the process and help even adults remember the importance of our historical documents.

Another reason to begin a Freedom week is that it sets a specific time to remember the founding of our nation and also gives us the opportunity to pool our resources as a school and with those in our community. It will remind those of us that may have forgotten the importance of our freedoms and it passes it down to the next generations.

Who will set the criteria for Freedom Week?

The state board of Education will be responsible to implement the rules and regulations of Freedom Week that will be a part of the civil government curriculum. This would include the study of the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution including the bill of rights, the American Revolution, the diversity of our nation, the abolitionist and women's suffrage movement.

What is the cost?

The fiscal note should be in your bill books. It should not cost the state any more funds to implement Freedom Week. Other states that have implemented a Celebrate Freedom Week have a link on their Department of Education website that list activities, books and other links that would help in the planning of this week. I have included a sample of what the state of Arkansas has put into action. It is with the hopes that other state and local government agencies with the assistance of private partners that will want to help make this program a success.

When will it begin?

The state board of education will adopt the rules by December 2013 and the first Freedom Week will begin September 2014.

My hopes for this bill is to integrate a specific time across the state where every child and community is involved in celebrating the wonderful freedoms and liberties that we have been blessed with as a country. I see it as an engaging time for teachers, administrators, parents, grandparents, veterans, current military, businesses, and other entities to unite and remember what makes America great.

Thank you madam chair for allowing me to come and share my passion about this bill and I will now stand for questions.

Below is a list of states that have passed "Celebrate Freedom Week" with a link to a website with information concerning it

Oklahoma

<http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/SSCelebrateFreedomWeek.pdf>

Arkansas

<http://adesharepoint2.arkansas.gov/memos/Lists/Approved%20Memos/DispForm2.aspx?ID=416>

Texas

http://www.texaslr.org/downloads/112004_lp_k-2.pdf

Florida

<http://www.fl DOE.org/bii/Humanities/celebratefreedom.asp>

Pending legislation is in Georgia and Michigan