

## State of Kansas



### Representative Ann Mah

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE  
CHAIRMAN – SEN. LYNN  
TESTIMONY HB 2023

I speak in opposition to HB 2023. This bill is about two things – silencing middle class workers and making sure corporate PACs gain an edge in 2014. It is a blatant attack on the First Amendment rights of Kansas teachers, firefighters, police and other public employees.

Under current law, public union members may choose to voluntarily have political action committee (PAC) donations taken out of their checks through payroll deduction. Payroll deductions are generally negotiated between the union and employer. To change state law to disallow these payroll deductions is wrong. First, it denies the union members' right to a negotiated benefit. Why would the state legislature want to jump in the middle of contract negotiations and remove from the table a benefit the employer may want to provide and employees want to receive? As has been said many times in this body, the legislature should get out of the way and let employers run their businesses as they see fit. Payroll deductions are simply an employer-provided service that doesn't need to be micromanaged by big government.

Second, and more obvious, eliminating payroll deductions means "game over" for public employees who want to support candidates with a united voice. It is no secret that employees support candidates who support them. Corporate employees support "pro-corporation" candidates and teachers support "pro-education" candidates. As a former utility manager, I donated through a corporate PAC to "utility-friendly" candidates. But when you realize the main support for this bill comes from large corporate sponsors who invest heavily in elections, the end game becomes more obvious – elimination of minority party candidates and public employee unions. I encourage you to just say "no" to corporate special interests and stand up for the people instead.

You have to ask yourselves: Are Americans for Prosperity, the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and the Koch brothers so scared of the power of workers that they must silence workers' voices in this way? Didn't the Supreme Court recently rule that spending your money to help candidates was a First Amendment right? Isn't this bill just the first step in silencing all union members?

Last session, this bill was pitched as the “payroll protection” law, as if workers needed to be protected from their First Amendment rights. If there is genuine concern about PACs spending workers’ money for candidates the workers don’t personally support, the answer is obvious – they don’t have to donate to the PAC. A worker can end the payroll deduction at any time. It would be difficult to imagine that many candidates would be supported by 100% of a PAC’s membership. That’s why union PACs often vote on which candidates to support. In any case, participating in the PAC is voluntary.

I had to laugh at the accusations in the House about teachers being “bullies” and “thugs”, forcing others to join KNEA. I was a member of two different KNEA locals and was never coerced into joining. But I had a good “thug” mentor, as pictured on the attachment. That’s my 80-year-old mother at the bottom of the photo. Better watch out for her.

If this bill had anything to do with protecting employees or their money - or being fair for that matter - it would also include a provision that denies corporate PACs the opportunity to collect donations through payroll deduction. Either this bill should be rejected outright, or the playing field should be leveled so that corporate PAC payroll deductions are ended along with public employee payroll PAC deductions. Since there is no public policy benefit to denying First Amendment rights to anyone, I recommend the former. Public employees should have the same right to access the ease of PAC payroll deduction as corporate employees.

Every Kansas citizen should ask themselves, “If this bill passes, are my rights next?” It is not the powerless who will destroy our Democracy, it is the powerful. This bill is the very definition of tyranny of government. Today is the day to tell the powerful they cannot take our Democracy. Not today. Not on our watch.

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# THE TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL

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## 'Union thugs' disrupt House

### Labor activists riled over bill that ends a payroll deduction

By Tim Carpenter  
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Kansas Republicans accused organized labor activists Thursday of forcing female legislators to endure sexually explicit and degrading comments while passing into the House chamber before a vote to end automatic deductions from paychecks for union political causes.

Democrats and a representative of the Kansas AFL-CIO displayed the GOP ethics, and both sides pointed to video evidence to support their interpretation of events.

House Speaker Mike G. Neal, R-Hutchinson, said the vocal crowd crossed the line by engaging in such commentary outside of the House chamber while shouting inside the chamber when the paycheck bill came to a vote.

"There were comments of sexually explicit nature directed at both female legislators and female staff," G. Neal said. "That's the most disrespectful display from the gallery I've seen in 27 years I've been here."

The still two union sympathizers of (emph) to prohibit female House members from voting against the measure, which was passed 75-66 and forwarded to the Senate.

As word spread of tension on the third floor of the statehouse, House members

were instructed to enter the chamber by a back hallway. No one was injured, and there were no arrests.

James Tunnell, executive vice president of Kansas AFL-CIO, said allegations that union members did anything other than express a "free Amendment right of free speech" were false.

"We've got nine minutes of video that show we were absolutely not disrespectful to any female Republican legislator," Tunnell said.

The still opponents of the bill took up positions in the House gallery and shouted "inaction is support" and "vote no" when C/Snell filled for the final vote on House Bill 1110.

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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Union members watch Thursday for the Kansas House vote on a bill to prohibit labor groups from deducting money from paychecks for union political causes.