



Shawnee County Office of County Counselor

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February 1, 2016

House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
Rep. Mark Hutton, Chairperson
Kansas State Capitol
Statehouse, Room 521-E
Topeka, KS 66612

RE: House Bill No. 2325 – Enacting the Public Employee Bargaining Transparency Act

Chair Hutton and other distinguished members of this committee:

The Shawnee County Board of County Commissioners opposes House Bill No. 2325 which would require collective bargaining sessions between a public employer and a labor organization to be public meetings and would be subject to the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

This legislation is a solution in search of a problem. Most information surrounding Shawnee County's PEERA employees, except the actual contract negotiations, are already made available to the public. Every labor contract is approved in an open public meeting and is available through a Kansas Open Records Act request. The current impasse resolution procedures are also public.

The public discussion of personnel related matters and issues surrounding contracts under negotiation is ill advised as a matter of public policy. That public policy has already been expressed by the Legislature through the Kansas Open Meetings Act by allowing public bodies to discuss pending negotiations in executive session. This legislation turns this good public policy that has been in place for years on its head.

House Bill No. 2325, as written, is overly broad and could impact other "meet and confer" meetings that do not directly involve collective bargaining but are necessary as part of a well functioning labor/management relationship. Making such meetings public will dramatically slow down management's ability to function on a day to day basis and react to any number of unanticipated circumstances that arise during the life of a labor contract.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rich Eckert", written over a horizontal line.

Rich Eckert
Shawnee County Counselor
Shawnee County Legislative Coordinator