



Testimony before the
House Committee on Education
on
HB 2345

by

Rod Stewart, President

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **HB 2345**. I am serving this year as President of the Kansas Association of School Boards, having been elected by the KASB Delegate Assembly. I am also the vice president of the Washington County USD 108 Board of Education, a consolidated district serving the students in our north central Kansas county.

We appear as an opponent of this bill. Even before a hearing was announced, KASB received numerous questions about why this bill is being proposed and heard concerns that many current school boards members and candidates running this Spring would be unable to serve in the future if this bill is passed. We object to the bill for three major reasons.

First, it is unnecessary. There already exist in state law strong safeguards against conflicts of interest. State law prohibits school board members from participating in making contracts between their business and the school board on which they serve. A board member can be forced to forfeit their office for a violation of the act. (See KSA 75-4304(e)). In addition, violations of the act could also be a misdemeanor. (See KSA 75-4306.)

School board members are also already prohibited by state law from being an employee of or receiving compensation from their district. However, this bill would prohibit a school board member from working for *another* school district, and it would, for the first time, prohibit having a spouse, sibling or parents working for either the school district where the board member serves or any other district in the state. Under this bill a school board member in Colby could be disqualified from serving if he or she had a brother or sister working for the Blue Valley school district. How is that reasonable?

Second, it would make numerous qualified and dedicated individuals unable to serve, especially in small communities where many people are linked to the school district - and each other - by ties of employment and family. However, these voters are very aware when board members have spouses or siblings working for the district, work for employers that do business with the schools, or provide direct services.

This bill seems to assume the State knows better than Kansas voters who should be qualified or disqualified based on business or family relationships.

Third, it is fundamentally unfair in singling out school board members. If these standards apply to school boards, they should apply to all other elected offices, from the Legislature and other executive branch agencies to community and technical colleges to cities and counties.

Having school board members who know something about schools through business and families ties strengthens boards of education. There already are safeguards against conflicts of interest and nepotism. This bill would simply reduce the pool of available and knowledgeable people to serve on school boards. Legislators have talked a lot this session about the need to increase voter turnout in school board elections. Why would we want to increase turnout while at the same time decrease the pool of qualified candidates? We respectfully urge you to oppose **HB 2345**.

Thank you for your consideration.