

Date: March 5, 2015
House Committee on Education
Attn: Representative Ron Highland and Committee Members
Testimony in opposition of HB 2345

I am a current board member of Neodesha USD 461. We are a small school district in the southeast part of the state.

I oppose HB 2345. If this bill were to pass I would be unable to serve my local school district because my sister is a superintendent 150 miles away from the district I live in. I have a teaching degree in secondary mathematics but stopped teaching to be involved in our family farming operation and spend more time at home raising my children. Serving on the school board is a way I can use my educational background to serve my community. The fact that my sister is a superintendent in another part of the state has nothing to do with my ability to serve on my local school board. In fact it probably makes me a better board member because I am more aware of what is going on in other districts across the state because of her position. We have a very small community and honestly the school district is one of our community's biggest employers. It would be impossible to find enough people in our small community that aren't related to an educator to run for school board positions. The local voters should be allowed to decide who represents them on their school board based on that person's qualifications, not on what career a member of their family has chosen.

We currently have board members who have family members who are employed by the same school district. If at any time a matter is at hand that involves a family member, the board member simply excuses themselves from the discussion and vote. It is up to the other board members and superintendent to see that there is no conflict of interest. We are all professionals and are quite capable of doing this. That is why there is a board of seven members.

I urge you to oppose HB2345. If this bill is upheld, what will be next? Will the next step be that parents of school children in that district can't serve on the board because there is a conflict of interest? Let the voters decide who represents them on their school board. Communities have enough trouble already finding qualified candidates for school board positions, don't limit who can run. You will only further narrow the pool of applicants.

Submitted by:  Date: 3/3/15
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