

STATE OF KANSAS

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GREG SMITH

Chairman Highland and Members of the House Education Committee:

Senate Bill 70 is a needed change to teacher and school employee background checks. This bill provides a mechanism to keep our students in grades K – 12 safer by doing the following:

1. It will efficiently provide a way for approximately 35,000 teachers in Kansas to submit their fingerprints for identification and a background check. Short of DNA identification, fingerprints provide a positive identification of the person's identity being submitted for a background check. It ensures that teachers are fingerprinted and background check at every license renewal.
2. It will revoke, instead of denying renewal of a teaching license of a teacher convicted of certain crimes or who enters into diversion for certain crimes. Without the tool of immediate revocation teachers could possibly stay employed after being convicted of certain crimes until the renewal date of their credentials putting our students at risk.
3. It provides for an efficient and sure way of notifying KSDE of a teacher who has committed one of the disqualifying crimes instead of the inefficient way this is currently done. In practice, rather than try and determine if a person charged with a crime is a teacher, county and district attorneys in some counties are forwarding ALL arrest records to KSDE and relying on KSDE to identify teachers. This is not only inefficient but exposes personal information, such as date of birth or social security numbers.
4. It mandates that any school employee, not just teachers, who come in contact with students, must be fingerprinted and background checked every five years.

In the last five years at least three school personnel, one teacher and two administrators, in my school district were charged with crimes. At least one managed to keep the crime a secret until a reporter from a local news station uncovered the story. Senate Bill 70 provides a mechanism to keep parents and students in the know by providing secure background checks for anyone that contacts our students.

I urge the committee to recommend passage of Senate Bill 70.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Smith".

Senator Greg Smith
Chairman, Senate Corrections & Juvenile Justice
Vice Chairman, Senate Judiciary

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

VICE-CHAIR: JUDICIARY; MEMBER: ETHICS, ELECTIONS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT; NATURAL RESOURCES AND UTILITIES