

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2719

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My name is George Cooper, and I'm a two-term city councilman from Bonner Springs. I'm here to voice my opposition to HB 2719.

With regard to Section 21, revision of K.S.A. 2015 Supp. 75-2551, the statute regarding regional library systems, this bill places an unreasonable burden on these library systems to submit the tax levy funding them to a vote of the people in their region. That is, they would receive their annual budget only through an affirmative vote of the electorate.

The cost of the election would be borne by the systems themselves at an estimated cost of \$3 per ballot.

We're asking all of our public institutions to be more efficient and cost-saving in their operations, and, as a proud Republican, I think we should be. This bill would tie up an enormous amount of resources--both time and money--in an annual ballot campaign.

And what would be the result of a negative vote? Even greater inefficiency and higher costs for library service in Kansas. Why? Because resource sharing saves money, and that's what the regional library systems do.

The Northeast Kansas Library System, for instance, subsidizes a large part of the NExpress Shared Catalog and the statewide courier system that gives our library patrons in Bonner easy access to over a million items at more than 40 nearby libraries. Bonner Library's own collection is limited to 50,000 items, so the services of the regional library expand our reach considerably.

The Northeast Kansas Library System also provides the personnel that serve as systems administrator for the catalog (a complicated piece of software that needs a lot of attention) and the administrator for the courier service, as well as other staff who provide tech support, administrative guidance, and continuing education for all the libraries in northeast Kansas.

Without the regional library system, each individual library would either have to hire their own staff to fill those roles--and that would cost a lot more than sharing one staff person across all those libraries--or they would have to go without, and that would mean a big step backwards for libraries in Kansas.

Thank you very much for your time.