



KANSAS POLICY INSTITUTE

ADVOCATING FOR FREE MARKETS AND THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL LIBERTY

Testimony to the Senate Commerce Committee SB179 – Limiting Negotiations Under the Public Employer-Employee Relations Act

March 11, 2015

David Dorsey, Senior Education Policy Analyst

Chairperson Lynn and Members of the Commerce Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support SB 179 that restricts collective bargaining to the minimum amount of salaries and wages and significantly reduces the period of a contract negotiations impasse.

Prior to joining KPI last year, I had nearly 35 years of experience in the public sector. I worked for 15 years in state and local government and the last 20 years I was an elementary school teacher.

During my teacher tenure, I experienced several times a situation in which the contract negotiations process stalled and had come to an impasse. An impasse can occur for many reasons, from something as major as salaries to something as seemingly innocuous as a dress code.

Even though SB 179 does not address public school employees and their contract negotiations, I believe my experience with negotiated contracts for teachers is germane to the topic.

The final year I was a teacher is an example. The Topeka Public Schools BOE and the teachers, represented by the Topeka-KNEA, came to an impasse. The procedures under current law allowed this deadlock to drag on for months and it wasn't until nearly the end of the school year the issues were solved and the contract was settled.

Many of my teaching associates, both union members and non-members like myself, expressed frustration and anxiety while the process moved at a snail's pace, while we should have been focused on teaching.

Just like a long-drawn out impasse between a board of education and a teacher's union is not good for students, a similar impasse involving other public sector unions is not good for the public.

Public employees deal with many distractions, we all accept it as part of the job. However, the distraction caused by the uncertain working conditions created because of a contract stalemate is an unnecessary burden. And the longer the impasse, the greater the distraction, and ultimately the greater the negative impact on those we are hired to serve.

Not only does this bill significantly reduce the length of an impasse, but it also reduces the potential of one in the first place. By eliminating all negotiated items but salary, there is inherently less probability for a stalemate in the first place.

Thank you once again. I will gladly answer any questions.