

TESTIMONY
IN OPPOSITION TO SB 212
SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
Andy Sanchez, Kansas AFL-CIO

March 12, 2015

Thank you Madam Chair and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and share our opposition to SB 212. The bill would infringe upon how employees spend their hard earned paycheck by unfairly dictating that certain deductions are not permissible.

The minimal task performed by the State of Kansas payroll department to deduct union dues is a minor function that is already performed by the State as a public employer in addition to other deductions for various entities of charity, insurances and taxes. Further, numerous public employee organizations have related they pay a fee for such service. This practice has been in place and worked effectively for decades. Now, in yet another legislative session where numerous anti-union bills have been proposed, this system is proclaimed to be a problem. I can see why public workers might feel as though they have been targeted; they have been singled out as an entity in a group of others who utilize payroll deduction and as a union, public sector versus private sector.

SB 212 actively seeks to restrict public employees from participating in their union and the political process. By restricting public employees from voluntarily participating in their union, this legislature will have effectively stifled the voice of workers. The thought is that by creating new restrictions on unions that a balance of power will tilt even further against a shrinking middle-class. There are real concerns that the agenda sought is to eradicate unions entirely. As it stands, union members have a choice to join a union, set their own dues, elect their own leaders and vote on where and how their money is spent. Politically, this comes in the wake of poor voter turnout, just barely over 50% of registered voters. The ratio is worse when we consider all that are eligible to vote. I should note, no worker can be forced to fund a union's political and legislative activities.

Public employees provide a valuable service to Kansans and they seek to be partners, not enemies of the State. It shouldn't be a take-it or leave-it workplace, that is how work conditions deteriorate. And it shouldn't be an environment where an alternative voice is not tolerated. Please oppose SB 212. Thank you.