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**Testimony to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
Tuesday, February 17, 2015**

To: Chairman Ostmeyer and the members of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 153 in support of granting public libraries a permanent exemption from existing state law requiring that people with conceal and carry licenses be allowed to enter those buildings.

The Board of Trustees of the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library voted to exempt library buildings under Section 2(a) of the Personal and Family Protection Act on October 17, 2013. To make an informed decision, the Board engaged in a year-long intensive, deliberative review considering public safety, liability, costs, public comment and our residents' ability to use, enjoy and feel safe in the library they support with their tax dollars. The Board concluded that it was in the best interests of the library and library users that guns and other weapons not be permitted on its premises.

Factors to consider:

- **Libraries are Educational Institutions:** Like public schools, the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library and public libraries everywhere are part of the educational system in their communities. This exemption is currently held by K-12 public schools. It is logical that the same consideration be given to public libraries, which provide literacy and learning experiences with collections, services and programs for people of all ages, from babies to older adults.
- **Safety of Children:** Like public schools, the library serves thousands of children and their families. The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library has on average three thousand visitors a day. That includes hundreds of children that are accompanied by parents and young people who visit the library independently.
- **Cost:** There are significant costs associated with heightened security measures required by the current law. The library is open 78 hours per week and employs professional security personnel including off-duty local law enforcement officers.

There is no question that the Board of Trustees would welcome a permanent exemption from the existing state law.

My thanks for the opportunity to state the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library's support for Senate Bill 153.

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