

Senate Select Committee on KPERS
Senator King, Chairman

Working After Retirement

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Wichita Public Schools

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

Thank you for reviewing the working after retirement statute. This is an important tool for school districts who are required to have qualified staff. We agree with the need to extend the working after retirement provision. The draft proposal has provisions both favorable and unfavorable.

Wichita Public Schools 51,000 students have wide ranging educational, academic, social and health requirements. The district averages 430 substitutes each day of which 75 are long-term substitutes. Of these obviously large numbers only 16 are "working after retirement" (over 630 hours in KPERS covered position). The district has used this tool with judiciousness while still aggressively recruiting in 17 states to find highly qualified educators.

Recently the district has had two scenarios, which may illustrate the difficulty in setting limitations on working after retirement. Last August, the weekend before school began a third grade teacher suddenly died. Her classroom, in a high poverty school, required a skilled teacher who was available immediately. We turned to a retired teacher who was familiar with the protocols, reading adoption, classroom management procedures.

As a large urban district we serve groups of students with low incident disabilities including the visually impaired (VI). There are three university programs in the area for VI. Nebraska closed their program last year, Missouri has a restricted license which Kansas does not recognize, and Texas where graduating students can start at a higher salary. Wichita has had a VI position open for two years. Even with aggressive recruiting we are unable to hire a qualified VI teacher. A retiree has been filling the position for two years. This very real example may conflict with the proposal in two areas – prohibition for the retiree to be the most recent incumbent and limiting WAR to three years. Some teacher endorsements are simply rare commodities, which are very difficult to fill and are the only qualified person to fill certain positions.

There are provisions of the draft that raise questions as to the impact, and we would like to have the opportunity to fully understand.

We urge the committee to extend working after retirement and consider exempting special education teachers, mandated positions, from the actuarial surcharge.