



Winfield Vikings-USD 465

Winfield Public Schools
J. K. Campbell, Superintendent
Mark Littell, Assistant Superintendent

1407 Wheat Rd.
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February 15, 2017

To: Kansas House Committee on Taxation
From: J.K. Campbell, USD 465 Superintendent
RE: Proponent for House Bill 2341

Rep. Steven Johnson, Chair

This letter is written to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2341. USD 465, the Winfield Public School System, is one of the largest employers in Winfield and Cowley County. USD 465 currently employs 271 certified teachers and 211 classified employees. Additionally, USD 465 serves as the governing agency for the county-wide special education cooperative. This adds 96 certified or licensed personnel, 250 para-professionals, and 5 classified personnel under the district's employment.

Our district, like most rural districts across the State of Kansas, is facing much greater difficulty in recruiting a high quality workforce. This is due to a number of factors including the economic downturn causing many families to relocate to metro areas where jobs are more plentiful, an inability to pay competitive wages compared to area business and industry, and an inability to compete with out-of-state salary and benefit packages and added recruitment incentives such as sign-on bonuses.

The Winfield school district is faced with an aging workforce. Over the past five years we have added an average of 30 new certified or licensed teachers per year. Last year alone, we replaced 38 certified staff members due to retirement and resignations. Although Southwestern College has a teacher preparation program, it is a small, local college that does not produce nearly enough graduates in the field of education to fill openings throughout the county. Each year, we attend college and university teacher recruiting fairs within the State of Kansas and in surrounding states. Like other districts, we are seeking the best and brightest and we work hard to sell Winfield and Cowley County as the best place to live and work in the state. Fewer and fewer young people are seeking degrees/certifications in the field of education so competition for teachers among Kansas districts is quite strong. When out-of-state districts are added to the mix, it becomes even more important to strategically recruit and market to a decreasing number of available candidates. Out of state districts often offer signing bonuses up to \$5,000. Large, metro districts easily draw in young candidates enamored by big city and all the amenities provided there. For this reason alone, designating Cowley County as a ROZ county would serve as a huge benefit to our recruitment efforts and marketing strategies.

The mission of USD 465 is to provide all students opportunities to gain knowledge and skills necessary for successful living in a changing world.



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In closing, you are no doubt well versed in the benefits to rural counties holding a ROZ designation. Outside of public education, area business and industry could more easily entice candidates to consider working and living in Cowley County – adding to this region’s economic sustainability and increasing enrollment in area schools. Additionally, our youth often leave the county for post-secondary education and, once completed, opt to live in more urban settings. The ROZ designation would serve to attract young people back to communities within the county to work and raise families. ROZ has worked successfully across Kansas, as many counties already have this designation. Cowley County would benefit from such a designation and deserves strong consideration for such.

Respectfully Submitted,

J.K. Campbell,
USD 465 Superintendent

Cc: Representative Anita Judd-Jenkins
Representative Ed Trimmer
Senator Larry Alley