

Testimony in Support of SB 155 – Assessed Valuation of Certain School Districts
House Standing Committee on Education
March 1, 2012
Testimony of Doug Moses

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding SB 155. My name is Doug Moses and I am a lifelong resident of Chetopa, Kansas. I operate a small business in Chetopa. I have held many positions in my community from City Council member to Volunteer Fireman. However, my position of board president with the USD 505 School Board might be the most important position I have ever held. For you see when we embrace the thought of the future of education, we are essentially shaping and molding the future leaders of our communities, counties, State, and maybe even our nation. I am here today to show support for the passage of this Bill as the passing of the Bill will benefit all 3,600 plus students of Labette County.

Today, I would like to provide you with a somewhat detailed timeline concerning local progress towards resolving the issue addressed by SB 155. After the Senate passed this Bill during the 2011 legislative session, opposition surfaced shortly thereafter. This opposition consisted of representatives of USD 506. Mr. Chuck Stockton, Superintendent of USD 506, circulated a document that, among other things, requested that members of the House allow time to rework the Bill at the local level and to amend the Bill to base the funding formula on a more stable measure. In March 2011, I was part of a meeting with your committee leadership and several supporters of the bill. During the meeting, Chairman Aurand told us he had met with the opposition, and asked them to meet with the proponents of the bill to work out a local solution prior to the 2012 legislative session. I left that meeting with Chairman Aurand optimistic that we would reach a compromise at the local level.

Those opposing SB 155 never have contacted any of us who expressed support of the Bill during the last legislative session. However, Chuck Stockton did contact the neighboring school districts, but this did not happen until November 29, 2011. During this initial communication from Mr. Stockton, the respective superintendents of those districts were informed that he and former USD 506 board member, Jennifer Mathes, would be hosting a meeting on January 4, 2012

whereby they would be providing a brief presentation concerning the Bill. The three superintendents and one board member from each of the school districts were invited to attend.

In accordance with Mr. Stockton's request, the three superintendents as well as the three presidents of the respective boards of education traveled to Altamont on January 4, 2012 for the presentation. I was in attendance as a representative of USD 505.

After a brief introduction by Mr. Stockton, Mrs. Mathes took charge of the meeting. The near 40 minute meeting consisted of nothing more than her telling those in attendance why this Bill should not be supported. When members of the audience questioned her or implied that some of her assertions could be interpreted differently, she quickly became angry and her tone became threatening.

There was a lengthy silence upon the completion of Mathes' presentation. Breaking the awkward silence, Mr. Quirin, USD 503 board president, asked Mr. Stockton what he had hoped to accomplish that evening. Mr. Stockton replied that he and his board of education wanted to know if the three other districts planned to support SB 155. No firm commitments were provided by the district representatives in this regard. However, representatives from each district did comment on how the revitalization and industrialization of the former KAAP property was a County-wide initiative and that funds and groups of people from all areas of the County were coming together for the benefit of this project.

Mr. Karlin and Mr. LaTurner, superintendents of USD 504 and USD 505, respectively, then asked questions concerning the comparability of the examples contained within Mathes' presentation to the KAAP situation in Labette County. A brief discussion then ensued on this particular aspect of the presentation.

Mr. Quirin then asked Mr. Stockton if his district wanted to negotiate the terms of the revenue allocation or otherwise offer an amended version of SB 155 that would be agreeable to all districts. Mr. Stockton indicated that USD 506 was not interested in negotiating the terms of or otherwise amending SB 155. Rather, USD 506 intended to oppose the Bill. He stated he hoped all other districts would do the same. Mrs. Mathes then concurred with Mr. Stockton's statements and told us that she was going to do whatever was necessary to keep the property in USD 506 territory. The intensity in Mrs. Mathes' voice was clear to all in

attendance. Feeling that the tone of the meeting was severely deteriorating, those in attendance excused themselves and the meeting adjourned.

As I left the meeting and traveled back to Chetopa, I thought about how the meeting accomplished nothing in terms of a local solution. Why did we not have substantive discussion concerning the requests and alternatives that were detailed within USD 506's own document they had circulated the past legislative session? Specifically, why were we not reworking the Bill at the local level per Mr. Stockton's request? Why were we not talking about alternative funding formulas as Stockton suggested should be evaluated? And finally, why were we not following Chairman Aurand's and our own Representative Proehl's advice of working together on an agreed upon Bill?

The history of this piece of property known as the Kansas Army Ammunition Plant takes us back to the time of redistricting of school districts. The Plant was a thriving part of the economy in Southeast Kansas during the years to come, and now with the transfer of this property back to the Great Plains Development Authority we believe the property should continue to benefit all of Labette County again. As you will hear in Mr. Quirin's testimony, the facts preceding the current KAAP to Great Plains transfer are very unique. I ask that you evaluate these facts and hope you concur that SB 155 provides an innovative way to increase job potential, economic growth, and enhance education funding in Labette County.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for the job you do for us here in Kansas.

Doug Moses, President USD 505 Chetopa/St. Paul School Board