

February 7, 2013

Testimony on House Bill 2109

Chairman Cassidy
Members of the House Education Budget Committee

My name is Bob Shannon. I am Superintendent of Manhattan-Ogden USD 383 in Manhattan. Our school district is located along the eastern boundary of Fort Riley. The community of Ogden, the location of one of our elementary schools, is immediately outside the garrison's east gate.

I am here this afternoon in support of HB 2109 relating to the February 20 count of children of active duty military personnel. The proposed bill would extend consideration given to school districts surrounding our military installations in Kansas and the needs in educating military-related students.

The number of military students enrolled between September and February over the years in Manhattan-Ogden ranges from 100 to 200. The February 20 provision provides our district a margin of confidence to make the best possible plans for our military students prior to the beginning of the school year in August.

We currently educate 1300 military students in our district. Statements from Fort Riley indicate that this number could continue to increase as the dwell times are lengthened and the combat needs change in Afghanistan. The garrison office works closely with area schools to provide good information about when troops will arrive and depart, but the nature of world affairs can change their needs and plans with relatively short notice. When the Army is on the move, often times, the Army's children are also on the move.

Our school district has responded with actions to accommodate the new children and welcomed growth. The school districts in our region have worked closely as a team for many years to support children of the United States Army as they come to us from all over the country and world. They enrich our classrooms and schools, but also require resources to serve them well beginning with the first day they walk through the school doors. Although many military family relocations occur during the summer months; there is a significant number who must relocate throughout the year when orders come to serve the country.

The Manhattan community, together with all other communities and school districts in the Fort Riley region, is grateful for our unique opportunity and responsibility to support our soldiers and their families. We are proud that Kansas was the first state to approve the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The Compact addresses challenges facing schoolchildren of military parents when they are required to relocate across state lines. In the fall of 2005, we reversed the decision to close an elementary school building that was to have been taken out of service in May of 2006. Furthermore, we re-opened another elementary school building that closed ten years ago. Manhattan voters approved \$97.5 million in construction bonds to expand most of our school buildings. As a community, we are excited about these changes in enrollment, but also know that we have some uncertainty with another possible Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) as well as decisions about troop deployments.

Because the growth of families stationed at Fort Riley requires our area schools to hire teaching staff, provide resources, transportation, and supplies; our Manhattan-Ogden Board of Education believes it is important that the February 20 count be extended as provided in House Bill 2109. Thank you for your support for all school children in Kansas as well as consideration for military students.

Robert Shannon, Superintendent
Manhattan-Ogden USD 383

