

**Testimony before the  
House Education Budget Committee  
on  
House Bill 2003  
submitted by  
Dr. George Griffith, Superintendent, Trego County USD #208**

Chairman Cassidy and members of the House Education Budget Committee. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear today and speak on behalf of Trego County Schools and to express our concerns about HB 2003.

Kansas is a local control state and the local option budget gives districts the opportunity to raise local revenues to support programs that we deem very important to our community. Unfortunately, the local option budget has not been a true option during the past five years as we have had to use more of our local funds to offset the cuts in state support. If House Bill 2003 were to be enacted our district stands to lose over \$100,000 in the first year. In the following years, under the current funding formula, our district might have a gain of about \$85,000, provided the base state aid remained at \$4492, an amount not guaranteed by this legislation, because as you well know, state aid is still subject to appropriation, in spite of what the statute says. Even with this projected increase, the funding for USD 208 would still be about \$500,000 below what the court ordered based upon our current local option budget and the actual state funded base state aid per pupil of \$4492.

The financial impact of this bill will vary with other school districts depending upon their individual level of equalization. In reality, House Bill 2003 seems to be a poorly disguised attempt to appear to meet the court's order that the state meet its constitutional obligation to provide for a "suitable education". Calling a portion of our local option budget dollars state dollars will surely fool no court. In fact, the recent three judge Gannon district court decision specifically enjoined the State of Kansas from "performing the unconstitutional act of altering, amending, superceding, by-passing, diluting or otherwise changing, directly or collaterally, any portion of the School District Finance and Quality Performance Act" if the effect of such action would be to abolish, lower, dilute, or delay the revenue that would be derived from the base student aid per pupil set forth by K. S. A. 72-6410(b)(1) of \$4492. This district court injunction may be stayed while on appeal to the Kansas Supreme Court; however, it would seem

highly unlikely that the Supreme Court would ignore what the district court clearly felt could be an attempt by the legislature to amend the statutes to appear to be in compliance with its order.

If the state wishes to increase its funding for schools through the use of the property tax, then it should do so without changing our local option budget authority. As presented, this bill appears to be a state property tax increase on local communities that takes away part of our local boards ability to raise the revenue we deem appropriate to prepare our students to compete in today's world. If you wish to increase property taxes to help provide for our schools, do so, but please call it what it is.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2003.

Dr. George Griffith, Superintendent USD#208