



Learning For All • Whatever It Takes

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GEARY COUNTY USD 475
Senate Education Committee
Testimony on HB 2109
Relating to school districts and school finance
February 15, 2013

Chairman Abrams and members of the Committee, My name is Ronald P. Walker, Superintendent, Geary County USD 475. Please allow me to express my sincere gratitude for this grand opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2109.

HB 2109 is an essential part of the education, finance and programming for schools that have the honor of providing an education for our military dependents. We consider our responsibility to be a noble cause in support of our Kansas military families. There are multiple reasons why it is important to us.

Our collective school districts accept the responsibility to maintain the high quality of education for those who have chosen to serve this nation by giving their time, their talents, and in many instances, their lives!

Our school districts consider the duty to educate our military dependent children as our personal act of patriotism as well as a statement on behalf of the state of Kansas demonstrating our appreciation for their fathers and mothers who so freely serve our country by protecting our freedoms. Since my district supports the **Mighty Big Red One**, my board of education, school site councils and Chamber of Commerce all join me through resolutions in strong support of HB 2109. I also have the privilege to represent many of the districts in Kansas who serve students from military families as well as members of command from Fort Riley.

Some people may ask why it is necessary to support HB 2109. As many of my colleagues will attest, they learned firsthand this past summer about the life of a military dependent while attending a summit on the education of the military child. I know many superintendents, business owners and other citizens of Kansas were astounded to learn many of the students had moved five or six times before they reached 8th grade. Student **mobility** rates in USD 475 can be as low as **40%** or as high as **70%** in any given year. They also learned of the many stressors children face when one or both parents either deploy or is about to be deployed. As everyone became more informed about what our schools must do to educate military students many of my colleagues were amazed we have been able to maintain the academic results we have! However, we feel it is our duty to our students, parents, community, state and nation to offer the absolute best education to the children of the parents who serve and protect our nation.

We also want to make the state of Kansas proud of USD 475 as we serve our most prized heroes, our students of military families. There is strategic value for the state to invest in districts that serve our military! Why?

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As testified by John Armbrust, in addition to providing our students with a high quality education, the return on your investment of less than \$3 to \$5 million to support HB 2109 is more than matched by the economic impact of the states military personnel. The state of Kansas receives well over **\$7 billion** in total funds from all military sources with nearly **\$5.5 billion** in direct wages and contractual services through personnel.

The investment in the second count provides a tremendous bargain for the state of Kansas. Notice, I did not even mention the fact that money is turned over in the economy at least 2.2 times. I also did not mention all the construction activity, ordering of materials and equipment that totals in the billions and are largely purchased from Kansas firms. So the ROI to the state of Kansas is financially significantly and continues to highlight what is good about the state and its support of the military.

While we can never be sure of the outcome of any Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) action, we are positive that community involvement and state investments are definite ways to enhance the opportunity Kansas fare well in any future BRAC. We have the experience and we have the know-how to position Kansas in the best place possible. The second count is the **KANSAS WAY** to demonstrate to the powers to be in the Department of Defense and the Pentagon that Kansas is a military friendly state and we do care about the dependents of our heroes! The Kansas military dependent second count is known throughout the Pentagon as a best practice for all states. It is essential for Kansas to maintain the status of a military friendly state in the eyes of the Department of Defense. Why? There will be a Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) at some point and all of the states that lost during BRAC the last time have made a tremendous effort to recapture their bases and military support. We must do all we can do to protect the state of Kansas.

The concept of a military child second count is totally a Kansas concept. It is a unique way to provide stabilizing support for the military child who sees more in their young life than most of us will see in our lifetime.

I can still see the eyes and smile of the young 4th grader at one of my elementary schools. I had finished reading to the entire class and was enjoying speaking with the group of students. This young man walked up to me with a huge smile on his face. He looked me in the eyes, shook my hand and asked a simple question. He said, "Mr. Walker, can you teach me to be a man?" I was stunned by the question and replied, "Why do you ask?" He said, "My dad was killed in Iraq last night and before he left he told me if anything happened to him, I had to take care of my family! He had the greatest personality and such a sweet smile. I had no idea he was carrying the weight of the world on his back! Sadly to say, we expected this same student to score above proficient on his Kansas assessments in less than two months!

Since USD 475 hires so many military spouses as teachers and other support personnel in our district, you might imagine we work through many issues with them as well. There is one teacher in my district who recently married a soldier. She was very excited and very happy that her life now made sense. Then her husband deployed to Afghanistan. His deployment was for 11 months. While he was gone, there would be frequent reports about major injuries of soldiers in his platoon. Then there was the call that a soldier had died. No name was immediately attached. This teacher was very stressed for two days until the name was released. That was followed in two weeks with another announcement that a soldier had been killed, again with no name. She had to wait another two days for the name to be released. While all this was going on, the teacher maintained a very high level of instruction for her students and always met them with a very big smile on her face! This is what WE do in USD 475!

Both these examples are people I consider heroes and they provide my drive and determination to ensure their education is the very best we can provide. The second count helps us to do that.

It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the following site councils:

Junction City Middle School, Eisenhower Elementary, Franklin Elementary, Grandview Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, Milford Elementary, Sheridan Elementary, Spring Valley Elementary, Westwood Elementary, Ft Riley Elem, Jefferson Elementary, Morris Hill Elementary, Seitz Elementary, and Ware Elementary, Also Junction City High School, Fort Riley Middle School

I also am representing the following Boards of Education and Coops:

USD 207 Ft Leavenworth – Keith Mispagel, Superintendent
USD 383 Manhattan – Bob Shannon, Superintendent
USD 323 Rock Creek – Dr. Darrel Stufflebeam
USD 417 Morris County – Doug Conwell, Superintendent
USD 475 Geary County- Ronald P.s Walker, Superintendent
Twin Lakes Coop – Joint Resolution:
USD 223 – Barnes – Rick Simoncic, Superintendent
USD 334 Southern Cloud – Roger Perkins, Superintendent
USD 378 Riley County – Brad Starnes, Superintendent
USD 379 Clay Center – Mike Folks, Superintendent
USD 384 Blue Valley – Brady Burton, Superintendent

I also speak on behalf of thousands of military and especially **BIG RED ONE** family members in support of HB 2109.

It is my pleasure to stand and proudly give my full support to HB 2109 and provide a big thank you to this committee for being foresighted enough to give your support to our military families. For all of our military families, our soldiers, members of command, all schools, administrators and teachers and most importantly on behalf of our **CHILDREN** we say:

"No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great—Duty First"

Chairman Abrams and members of the Senate Education Committee, we all say **THANK YOU!**