



Written Testimony: SB 109
Lobbying by Associations
Senate Elections, Ethics and Local Government
February 11, 2013
By: Christy Caldwell
Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Pyle and Members of the Committee:

The Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce would like to express our opposition to SB 109 prohibiting lobbying by associations which receive membership funds from public organizations.

Our chamber, like many others across the state, works in partnership with our local governments. We work together to improve our communities for citizens and to attract private business investment and good paying jobs. This partnership many times results in local governments and/or agencies joining the chamber as members to further these efforts.

SB 109 would prohibit such memberships and may make some partnerships unworkable. The Topeka Chamber has great support from the City of Topeka, Shawnee County departments, local school districts, Washburn University, Washburn Institute of Technology, the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority and Topeka Transit Authority, all of whom are Topeka Chamber members. These organizations and others provide institutional and financial support as we work with them to better our community. They find their memberships just as valuable as we find their participation.

The Topeka Chamber also employs staff to lobby issues important to the economic growth of our community and jobs. I am able to inform elected officials about the impact local, state and federal legislation has on our economic growth and community prosperity. It would be regrettable should these public agencies not be able to support the business community efforts because the chamber exercises its right to communicate with elected representatives.

We ask you to consider the benefit of public/private partnerships and to not pursue this legislation. Separating public and private efforts is not a path to bettering our state. Finding ways to continue to work together will allow us to achieve great things; we think public sector membership and involvement in chambers of commerce and other associations is positive and should not be viewed as a barrier to the business community's desire to be represented by lobbyists in the Capitol, in our cities, counties, and other government agencies.

We appreciate your thoughtfulness and ask you to vote NO on SB 109.