



Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government

Senate Pyle, Chair

S.B. 150 – Purchasing Limitations

*Presented by Diane Gjerstad
Wichita Public Schools
March 7, 2013*

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee:

S.B. 150 would place unreasonable restrictions on the purchasing abilities of public school districts. The bill would effectively transfer the decision making authority for what products or goods meets the business needs of the district to a “competent authority in the industry”, a term which is without definition and vague.

Governor’s Efficiency Taskforce stated goal was to recommend ways to increase the amount of education dollars going to the classroom instruction. S.B. 150 would increase the cost to administer purchasing by allowing an unlimited number of products or materials to meet each and every bid. The bill would increase the time to finalize bid specifications. School districts are often chided to act more like a business. This bill would make the purchasing process most un-business like and to ignore the efficiencies derived from standardization.

Wichita Public Schools has developed specifications to guide purchasing decisions for materials, equipment and products. Specifications provide best value for taxpayer dollars by taking into consideration maintenance, repair and reliability. Fire alarms are one of the few sole sourced items in USD 259 and the reason is safety. When Wichita Fire or Police Departments respond to a report of a fire in a school, our first responders want to know where the alarm panel is located, the configuration of the panel and graphics. In a crisis situation continuity is critical. There is an issue of training. Only certified personnel can repair a fire alarm, having a single product reduces training costs. Exterior door locks would be another example. A high school usually has 50 exterior doors, 25 in a middle school and 20 in an elementary. One quadrant in USD 259 typically 715 exterior locks. If maintenance has to repair two per week the warehouse stocks for the historical replacement rate and the lead time required for delivery. Under SB 150 we might ultimately have 15 different brands which would increase the amount of stock maintenance trucks would have to carry, increase stock in the warehouse, and increase the number of exterior keys assigned at the buildings.

SB 150 would increase the cost for operations and maintenance for schools. For the last four years capital outlay state aid has not been funded, which reduces capital resources for middle and low wealth districts. Wichita Public Schools has lost over \$18 million in capital outlay equalization state aid the past four years. Since our collective goal is to get more dollars to the classroom, we would urge the committee to reject SB 150 and other legislation which would increase administrative costs for schools.