



Oral remote opponent testimony

HB 2039, requiring students to pass an American civics test in order to graduate with a high school diploma.

House Education Committee

by

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today as an opponent of HB 2039. Our legislative policies, reaffirmed by our Delegate Assembly on January 21, support efforts to improve student civic education through academic standards, accreditation, and school redesign.

The United School Administrators of Kansas join us on this testimony.

The State Board of Education's "[Kansans Can](#)" school redesign commitment to the success of each Kansan says one measure of student success is civic engagement. The State Board and local school districts, based on input from civic and business leaders from across the state, are moving beyond "seat time" and reliance on standardized tests in favor of emphasizing civics education and an increased focus on local public service. One example of this effort is the "[Students Serve](#)" partnership between the Kansas Secretary of State's office, KASB, USA-Kansas, KNEA and KSHSAA to recruit high school students aged 16 and older as election poll workers.

Our opposition to the bill also springs from the knowledge that standards set by the State Board and implemented by locally elected boards of education require students in the state's public high schools to take at a minimum three units of history and government, including U.S. History and instruction about the U.S. Constitution, to graduate. Many of our teachers and students were especially engaged in the Fall semester leading up to the November 2020 general election, and voter registration by eligible high school seniors reportedly was up compared to the 2016 election.

Finally, the Kansas Constitution bestows upon the State Board the authority for general supervision of public schools. Our members believe civic education efforts should be comprehensive and community based under supervision of the State Board rather than directed by legislative mandates. We believe



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broad-based community efforts will lead to the informed electorate and civic participation envisioned by the bill sponsor, Chairman Huebert.

As a result of these concerns, we believe this bill, while well-intentioned, is duplicative and conflicts with the State Board's jurisdiction over Kansas public schools. KASB and the United School Administrators of Kansas stand ready to work with the State Board and the legislature to make the goal of increased civic engagement a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify; I'm happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.