



Geary County Unified School District No. 475

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To: Kansas House of Representatives Education Committee

- Lana Gordon, Chair
- Clay Aurand, Vice-Chair
- Valdenia Winn
- Tom Arpke
- Ward Cassidy
- Brenda Landwehr
- Connie O'Brien
- Sheryl Spalding
- Bill Feuerborn

From: Ronald P. Walker, Superintendent
Geary County School USD 475

Date: January 25, 2012

Subject: HB 2439

overbonded growth / Keep up growth / Blue Ribbon schools / used funds for all day care / more grants than anywhere

Dear Honorable Lana Gordon and members of the House of Kansas House of Representatives Education Committee:

My name is Ronald P. Walker and I have had the honor of serving as the Geary County USD 475 school superintendent for over eight years. When I was first given this assignment, I immediately saw the needs of my school district were tremendous. As a result I begin to look at school districts in the state of Kansas who served students whose families are military. To my surprise there were over 30 districts who faithfully served military dependents.

I immediately met with the then serving superintendent from Fort Leavenworth to discuss how our districts could have a larger impact in the state of Kansas. We then approached former Representative and Chair of the House Education Committee Kathy Decker and held discussions on how to improve schools who served military families. The Kansas Military Second Count Date was born during those early discussions. The country was in fierce battle, heavily engaged in the War on Terrorism and many soldiers were being called up to defend America. Providing the military dependent was one way Kansas said thanks to the brave men and women who selected to serve on behalf of our country.

Since the original passage of the Military Child Second Count Date in Kansas, the state's education system has been on the Department of Defense's radar. They notice because Kansas was also

the very first state to pass the Interstate Compact for Military Children by Kansas. These groundbreaking legislation has placed the state among those the Department of Defense considers Military friendly. It certainly will not hurt during the next few rounds of Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC). The state of Kansas also assisted schools who had large percentages of military students to receive Department of Defense Education Activity grants. These grants came about in part because of the military friendly status Kansas enjoys. My school district also received a new elementary school and is currently having an elementary school renovated to the tune of \$30.6 million with all the taxes remaining in Kansas and most of the workforce being Kansans. Again thanks to friendly Kansas legislation like the military second count. We are also close to securing another grant for approximately \$38 million to build a new middle school thanks to efforts in Kansas like the second count. Then finally my district is in the running for a second elementary school that could cost between \$19 and \$22 million in part because of all the great things happening in Kansas. The workforce wages and taxes stay in Kansas and will more than offset the total cost of the military second count! These are things I stated would be possible if you as legislators would only assist us in helping provide the best possible education for the students of our soldiers. Many of you will remember I stated when the bill first became law and in subsequent testimonies that I would only request what our school districts needed to make a difference. Well this groundbreaking legislation has mattered! The state of Kansas has benefited from over \$7 million in DODEA grants, \$30.6 million in school construction and possibly another \$57 million. This is a big deal for our state. Why have we been so successful? Because brave legislators like you stood tall and knew the importance of the military to Kansas. The military contributes billions to the Kansas economy each year. We do not want to do anything to jeopardize the stability of the financial and human resources the military brings to Kansas.

Our students are the most mobile and unstable of any group of students in the state. They are also the most diverse. Yet as schools we continuously produce very good academic results! We provide the military with one of their most revered goals, a quality education as reported by a study conducted by KSU a few years ago. Soldiers and their families listed a quality education as the 2nd highest reason they would move to the rolling Flint Hills. The schools that serve the children of military families are known for their excellence in Kansas and we owe **you** a lot of that credit. You stood tall when some felt there was not a need to fund the military second count. You stood tall when the bill was renewed twice before. Now I ask you to once again stand tall and say to America, Kansas is a military friendly state and we will continue to support our military families. Their children deserve the best education we can give them and because they are military, they do not have to come here, they have choices.

Madam Chair, I do appreciate the time you have provided for me to provide a positive testimony and to give you and your committee your due credit in securing the future for the military families and their children in Kansas. You have made their stay in Kansas a great experience. Military families can move up to 5 times by the time their children reach the 7th grade. If the state of Kansas is one of those moves, you be assured by your action on bills like the military second count you have made their stay here a good one!