

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2023

Honorable Chairperson Lynn and Senate Commerce Committee Members.

No, the “sky is not falling” as claimed by opponents to this bill. Freedom of speech is well preserved. The right to form a union, pay dues and collectively bargain by public employees is also unchanged.

What this bill does is simply “level the playing field” and give each public employee a choice as to whether to contribute to a political PAC or not. Comingling dues for union activities with those used for political purposes is unlawful and needs to stop.

It is not the responsibility of government entities to automatically deduct money for public employee unions to use to lobby for more tax dollars or support candidates who will always demand more money to fund their salaries and benefits. If a union member chooses to make a separate contribution to a union PAC, there is nothing in this bill to prevent them from doing so.

Currently, tremendous pressure is put on individual public employees to “go along to get along”. Even though Kansas is a Right to Work state, new public employees feel like they have to join or be chastised by union members.

During the past four years, I have served on the Kansas State Board of Education. At various conferences and in phone calls I have received, I have been told by teachers that they do not agree with many of the political positions and demands being made by their union lobbyists. They are afraid to share their concerns in public for fear of being ostracized by union bosses. Many of these teachers are so concerned that they do not give their last name or the school in which they teach.

The KNEA has paid lobbyists attending each State Board of Education meeting. During lunch breaks and evening events, they sit with Board members to ask that they support their political position. But, in talking with classroom teachers, I find that often they did not know nor do they support what these KNEA lobbyists are promoting.

When government entities deduct union dues which are used for political purposes, they allow a small group of union leaders to meet behind closed doors to decide how to spend those dues to support candidates or take positions on legislation without the knowledge of their members. Why should a union member who is of a different political party or who supports a different candidate be forced to have their dues spent without their knowledge or consent?

This bill allows each union member to make a clear choice of whether to pay a separate contribution to a public employee PAC or not. As a result, they will have made an informed decision about the candidates and public policies they want to support.

That is what democracy in America is all about. This bill allows each union member to personally decide how and where they become involved in the political process. HB2023 preserves their choice and political speech.

I urge your support and vote to pass HB2023 to protect these individual rights!

Respectfully Submitted,


Walt Chappell, Ph.D., President

Educational Management Consultants

(316)858-5443 / educationalmanagers@cox.net

2/6/2013