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KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS  
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House Education Committee  
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House Bill 2234

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with today on HB 2234.

Our first thought upon reading HB 2234 was “Why?” What problem are we solving?

Speculation, as I am sure you are aware, is that this bill has surfaced simply because some university professors have written columns in newspapers critical of the legislature, the Governor, and specific policies adopted by the legislature. If that is true, then the bill suggests that citizens must put a lot of credence in the analysis of issues by university professors. Perhaps the bill is a kind of “anti-intellectualism” in that it prohibits the mention of what might be considered a higher level of education, knowledge, or credibility. As if everyone reading a column by a university professor would instantly assume he or she was right on the issue.

Cannot the same thing be said when a legislator writes a column for a newspaper? If identifying oneself as a university professor automatically confers credibility on the column – “Well, he must know, he’s a university professor!” – would not the identification of senator or representative also not automatically confer credibility? “Well, he must know, he’s a legislator!”

A real democracy demands the free exchange of ideas. A society that values all citizens must allow for dissent, differences of opinion, and challenges to conventional wisdom. A democracy thrives when all are heard and compromises are reached that produce benefit for the common good.

We must listen to others and we must be allowed to consider the possibility that other people bring expertise or specialized knowledge to the discussion. By virtue of being a legislator, you do. You have the inside scoop. Likewise political science professors have a deep understanding of the legislative process. Law professors have a deep understanding of the workings of judiciary.

Who better to talk about the day-to-day workings of a public school classroom than a public school teacher? Who better to talk about the impacts, both negative and positive, of the affordable care act than hospital administrators, physicians, and nurses? Who better to discuss the impact of agricultural legislation than farmers and ranchers?

HB 2234 is a “slippery slope.” If public post-secondary education employees may not identify themselves as such when writing, what is to stop the legislature from enacting the same prohibition for K-12 teachers? For municipal employees? For ranchers and farmers? Perhaps citizens will insist on such a prohibition for state legislators.

Finally, we wonder about the constitutionality of prohibiting one group of citizens from identifying their employment position. It strikes us that this would be a denial of free speech rights under the United States Constitution.

We urge you to reject HB 2234.