



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION February 18, 2015

Testimony Regarding HB 2234

Dr. Andy Tompkins, President and CEO

Chairman Highland and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral written testimony concerning HB 2234.

HB 2234, as introduced, would require the Board of Regents, as well as the governing boards of Washburn University, each community college and each technical college, to adopt and require to be implemented a policy that prohibits employees of the educational institutions they govern from using their official title when authoring or contributing to a newspaper opinion column when the employee's opinion concerns an elected official, a candidate for elected public office, or any matter pending before a legislative or public body. The Bill also makes it clear that these employees would be free to state their opinion on such matters as long as they do so without using their official title.

For informational purposes, The Board of Regents would like you to know that we currently have a policy dealing with political activity of state university employees as follows:

In the interest of the fullest participation in public affairs, personnel are free to express opinions speaking or writing as an individual in their personal capacity and not as a representative of the institution in signed advertisements, pamphlets and related material in support of or opposition to parties and causes. There shall be the commensurate responsibility of making plain that each person so doing is acting for himself or herself and not on behalf of an institution supported by tax funds drawn from citizens of varying political and economic views. This responsibility includes avoiding the use of university letterhead and stationery and other official university designations.

-- Chapter II: Governance – State Universities, Section C.13(d)

This policy is now in place and has been in one form or another since 1964.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2234. We are happy to answer any questions.

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