



**House Education Committee
Representative Highland, Chairman
H.B. 2345 – conflict of interest**

March 5, 2015
Lynn Rogers, vice-president
Wichita Public Schools Board of Education

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

I have served on the Wichita Public Schools Board of Education for fourteen years. During my tenure on the school board I have had the privilege to serve with individuals from a wide range of careers including the clergy, law enforcement, accounting, information technology, retired teachers and administrators. School Board members give freely of their time and talents, without compensation, to guide a school district's work. Together we have forged a board able to tackle difficult issues while focused on our mission to improve student achievement.

As we worked together on many difficult issues, the strength of our board has been the knowledge each brings to the table. House Bill 2345 would sharply narrow the pool of eligible candidates for school board and remove many different walks of life, with differing areas of expertise, different stories and backgrounds from school boards.

This bill broadly defines conflict of interest and would disallow people whose spouses, sibling or parent is employed by a school district or department of education. It would also greatly curtail local businessmen and women from serving on this important post. Both groups are vital to successful school boards.

Let me share a couple of examples of how broadly this is written and those who would be excluded. The Bank where I work serves agricultural cooperatives and agricultural producers throughout the state. Since one of these co-ops sells fuel to USD 259, it appears this bill would exclude me from future service.

USD 259 has a recently retired police officer on the Board. The district also contracts with the City of Wichita for school resource officers. This bill would have excluded the police officer from serving on the board. He is now employed in security for a financial institution doing business with the district and would again be disqualified him from serving under this bill.

Under current law, we declare a potential conflict of interest and leave the table while the issue/contract is discussed and voted on. As written this bill would impact several USD 259 board members. In a small town where the district does business with main street businesses and local banks, it would appear no employee from those businesses would be eligible to serve.

Let me extend the example of how many would be excluded from serving on local school boards by looking at the House Education Committee. Many of you would be ineligible to serve on the local school board under this bill. School districts deposit funds, purchase insurance, require legal consultation and under SB 155 contract for CTE classes with community colleges. If you as a professional (or your spouse) were affiliated with the bank, insurance company, law firm or community college doing business with the school district or state you would have a conflict of interest and be unable to serve on a school board.

Consider the value your differing perspectives bring to the legislative and committee process. The same holds true for school boards. Our discussions are richer when we have people with a variety of different careers serving.

I am a third generation school board member. My grandfather served on a school board in the 1960's. My father served on a school board in the 1980's. I am also the grandson, son, husband and father of teachers. I was raised to fulfill my stewardship in life through service to my community. Together my colleagues on the Wichita Board of Education and I are stewards of this wonderful institution we call public education. The points of view and talents brought to the table on Monday evenings would be diminished if this bill is passed. I urge you to not advance this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to share my concerns with the committee.