



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2015

Big Government “Protection?”

TOPEKA - Teachers, firefighters, law enforcement, and a host of hard-working Kansans were in attendance today for the Senate Commerce Committee final action on two bills aimed directly at dedicated public servants. Senate Bill 212 enforces the viewpoint of special interest legislators by limiting public employees’ ability to participate as consumers via payroll deduction. Senate Bill 179 strips public employees’ ability to advocate for strengthening their profession through established negotiations procedures. While ignoring dozens of working Kansans who offered testimony against both bills, the Senate Commerce Committee chose to appease a few lobbyists from the National Federation of Independent Businesses and the Kansas Chamber of Commerce by doubling down on their efforts to marginalize working Kansans.

Kansas NEA President, Mark Farr addressed dozens of teachers in attendance encouraging them and expressing pride in his profession. Farr said, “we know that there are representatives working for a special interest agenda and against hard working public employees, we will not stop advocating for our profession, our rights and most importantly our students.”

Senators Jeff Melcher, Mary Pilcher-Cook and Jim Denning executed a clearly scripted plan to bundle both bills into House Bill 2096 in an effort to expedite its passage into law. Senator Tom Holland rebuked this strategy calling the scheme “political shenanigans” while he apologized to those who packed the room on behalf of public employees.

Kansas NEA believes that eliminating an employee’s ability to make consumer choices and engage in payroll deduction infringes upon the local control of school boards and districts who already have the right to restrict these activities. Further, it sends a clear message that when state government opposes a particular viewpoint it will take extraordinary measures to enforce its power to limit the free expression of that viewpoint by citizens. Working Kansans deserve better than mean-spirited attacks and big government interference done solely for the purpose of advancing a special interest agenda.

###

Contact: Marcus Baltzell, Director of Communications
Kansas National Education Association
marcus.baltzell@knea.org - 785.232.8271