

Another House Committee ignores educators on education

Yesterday the House Commerce Committee held a hearing on HB 2326, a bill resurrected from 2013 that end the right of teachers to choose an exclusive bargaining agent and would radically limit what teachers and school boards would be allowed to negotiate.

This bill is not only a direct attack on teacher rights, it grants an individual teacher the right to negotiate his/her own contract but allows a school board to refuse to negotiate. It limits what school boards may discuss in bargaining, and taken the direction that Reps. Marvin Kleeb and Erin Davis argued, would create a labor nightmare for school administrators who would have to either negotiate with every teacher or refuse to negotiate with anyone (that would help morale!).

The bill was opposed by the Kansas Association of School Boards, the Kansas NEA, the Kansas School Superintendents Association, and United School Administrators of Kansas.

Supporting the bill was KSBOE Member Steve Roberts who argued that this would ensure that high school STEM teachers were paid more than "kindergarten teachers specializing in finger painting."

The history of this bill is interesting in that it first emerged in 2013 in the Commerce Committee then chaired by Rep. Marvin Kleeb. After several weeks of contentious hearings, Kleeb called the four education groups and directed them to negotiate changes to the bargaining law that would be acceptable to all four.

That is exactly what the groups did. They met for 18 months during which they gauged the needs and priorities of their members, exchanged ideas, brought in a negotiations facilitator, and negotiated in good faith seeking to secure the very agreement Kleeb requested.

In January the groups came to agreement and had a bill drafted reflecting that agreement (SB 136 and HB 2257). The groups first unveiled the agreement in a meeting with Rep. Kleeb believing that he would be excited that we had done he had requested.

Instead, in working the bill today, Kleeb joined Rep. Erin Davis in urging the committee to essentially ignore the education community and adopt a bill we all oppose.

HB 2326 was passed out of committee and now goes to the full House for consideration along with HB 2034 a bill that limits negotiations to salary only requested by anti-public education lobbyist Dave Trabert. HB 2034 was adopted by the House Education Committee.

This action puts two bills intended to essentially end collective bargaining for teachers on the House floor at the same time.

In the meantime the Senate Education Committee held a hearing on the education organizations' bill, SB 136, and on Monday will hold a hearing on SB 176, a bill to limit negotiations to minimum salaries and end mediation and fact finding. Neither bill has yet been adopted by the Senate Committee.

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Links

1. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=3205230fd2e4d659963eec704d4ad23b905704ab50a3f62ba7eb8d3c844e0886c2fbdf09443b41b9>

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