

OPPOSITION TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING ON SB 155

My name is Jerry Minneman, superintendent of schools, USD 307, Ell-Saline. I stand before you today in opposition of Senate Bill 155. The USD 307 Board of Education and I are very concerned with the precedent set by the passage of Senate Bill 155. A brief scan of this week's local news headlines reveals any number of problems Kansas public school districts are battling due to unprecedented reductions in state funding. Senate Bill 155 provides the example and language for future efforts by school districts to improve their own tax base at the expense of their neighbors.

In my own district, most of the Smoky Hill Air National Guard (ANG) Range resides within our district boundaries. A federal property, the Smoky Hill Air National Guard (ANG) Range, is frequently rumored for closing. Should the Smoky Hill Air National Guard (ANG) Range close and return to private ownership at some future time, the current efforts in Labette County pertaining to the Kansas Army Ammunition Plant, could be duplicated by individuals in Saline county. To think that 34,000 acres worth of assessed valuation could be up for grabs based upon the precedent set by Senate Bill 155 is, at the very least, disconcerting.

I would also like to remind committee members who may not be as familiar with Saline County, that we have previously experienced the closure of a military base that was later privatized. On November 19, 1964, the Department of Defense announced that Schilling Air Force base, along with 574 other bases around the world, would be closed. At this time the base was home to approximately 5,090 men. By May of 1965 the Salina Airport Authority had been created and the conversion of Schilling Air Force Base to the Salina Municipal Airport and Salina Airport Industrial Center began.

Please note that at no time during the Schilling Base closure and transfer of property, was there an effort to acquire assessed valuation and associated property taxes by a taxing entity whose boundary did not include the Schilling Base. Thus I am troubled by the efforts of those in Labette County responsible for the introduction of Senate Bill 155 that would promote the same efforts in my own county at the expense of my own district.

I would also like to sound the alarm to other Kansas school districts, such as our friends in Wyandotte County. Advancing this bill may encourage future bills of a similar nature targeting the potential tax base of prized properties, such as the Village West; a \$573 million, 400-acre retail, dining and entertainment development area that is home to the Kansas Speedway and recently opened Hollywood

Casino in addition to other potential commercial developments. The development of this prized property was the result of the efforts by many taxing entities. However, a check of school district boundaries and tax records indicates only one school district, USD 500, Kansas City, will benefit from property taxes. Again, there have been no initiatives coming out of Wyandotte County like those from Labette County that are being made here before you today.

For these reasons, I humbly request of you today not to advance Senate Bill 155. I thank you for your time and would stand for any questions during the appropriate time.

Jerry Minneman, Superintendent
Ell-Saline USD 307
P.O. Box 157
Brookville, KS 67425
(785) 255-6813
jminneman@ellsaline.org