



Smoky Valley Public Schools

USD 400 • 126 South Main • Lindsborg, KS 67456
(785) 227-2981 FAX (785) 227-2982

Testimony before the
House Education Budget Committee

HB 2215- School districts; transportation of nonresident pupils

Glen J. Suppes
Superintendent

Gwen Oleen
Board Clerk

Julianne Martin
Treasurer

Presented by Glen Suppes
Superintendent of Smoky Valley Public Schools, USD 400
President-elect, Kansas School Superintendents' Association (KSSA)

February 13, 2013

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony and appear today as a **proponent of HB 2215**. I am Glen Suppes, Superintendent of Smoky Valley Public Schools and President-elect of Kansas School Superintendents' Association (KSSA).

Smoky Valley Schools consist of 1,000 students in a district located in central Kansas based in Lindsborg. We serve several rural communities, including a K-6 building in Marquette. Marquette is located 8 miles from Lindsborg, where the 7-12 facilities are housed.

This year a neighboring school district drives a bus into Marquette, parks one block from our elementary school, and loads 14 resident students (grades 7-10). The bus then transports these students over 23 miles to attend in their own district. As small districts across the state begin to compete for neighboring students and struggle to maintain enrollment numbers, many will take advantage of the current 2.5-mile rule for the district's benefit; not necessarily for the benefit of each individual child and family.

The new 2.5-mile rule must revert back to 10 miles this year before things get completely out of control across the state. We cannot wait several years to see how this plays out. Once students establish themselves in a new school for a number of years, it will be difficult to pull the rug out from underneath them by removing transportation they have relied upon.

We support allowing families a choice of attendance centers, especially if distance is an issue. Students have always had opportunities to attend neighboring districts, if accepted by that district. But the 2.5-mile rule places many USD's in a difficult situation as they attempt to project enrollment numbers for budget purposes each year. If a neighbor can transport your students out of the district with little notice, it may greatly affect staffing after contracts have been established.

If the 2.5-mile rule reverts back to 10 miles, nothing prevents districts from working together to provide out-of-district transportation on a case-by-case basis, especially in unusual circumstances. Our hope is that we work in cooperation to provide what is best for every child. We should not leave these doors wide open to allow for active "recruiting" of our children. Districts may be placed in declining enrollment situations, and the effect of expanding routes on current students with regard to time spent on the bus, pick up and drop off times, and increased driver working hours, may receive little consideration.

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My district consists of 396 square miles. In most cases, we have worked with our neighbors to allow those on the fringes to be transported and claimed by that district, especially if it makes sense and is in the best interest of a child. But when districts can literally drive downtown in an adjacent district, or in any district for that matter, without consent, we have waged a battle to compete for numbers. Our local taxpayers do not wish to see busloads of students leaving the district because it greatly affects our budget and the programs that we can offer our students.

Many of my colleagues believe that we should maintain order among the districts, honor relationships, and recognize the established boundaries by repealing the 2.5-mile rule. Pitting districts against each other to see who can gather the most students should not be our focus. A desperate district fighting for survival might certainly take advantage of the current rule for selfish reasons, but then leave others in a difficult position without warning.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to be involved in this decision. We appreciate your support of HB 2215 and your consideration. Thank you.

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