



KANSAS STATE RIFLE ASSOCIATION

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Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 116; Standardizing firearms safety programs in school districts.

This language was heard by the Senate Fed & State committee back in 2021 as SB 522, was passed by the Legislature with wide margins as HB 2089, and was ultimately sent to Governor Kelly's desk where it was vetoed alongside civics and financial literacy standards that year.

The Kansas State Rifle Association requested reintroduction of the bill this year because our core beliefs in the importance of firearm safety education remain unchanged regardless of the Governor's veto. A culture of firearm safety is crucial and developing that culture is at the heart of the KSRA's mission.

Creating a standard for firearm education in schools based in objective fact is the only way to counteract the dangerous perspective many young people have developed from learning about firearms only through violent and careless examples on display across pop culture.

Our educational system understands the importance of preparing children for life by talking about stranger danger, teaching internet safety, conducting fire and tornado drills, and more. Firearm safety should not be excluded. But neither should it be an opportunity to promote a political agenda of any kind.

The Eddie Eagle program that is designated as one of the two standards in this bill makes no value judgments about firearms, no firearms are ever used or displayed as part of the training, and the program covers an important topic that needs to be addressed with kids. Like swimming pools, electrical outlets and matchbooks, firearms are simply treated as a part of everyday life. With firearms found in about half of all American households, it's a stance that makes sense.

Our nation is safer today because of the over 32 million kids who have learned firearm safety through the Eddie Eagle program. It would frankly be irresponsible to attempt to reinvent the wheel on a program so profoundly successful.

Kids are inherently curious and local school boards need a standard for firearm safety education should they choose to offer this type of education to their students.

This bill creates that statewide standard while leaving the final decision over whether to offer firearm safety training up to each individual school board. This is not a mandate for local school boards. Each district would be free to choose whether to offer firearm safety training based on the needs of its own community.

Under the bill, the Kansas Board of Education would be directed to create curriculum guidelines for schools to teach the time-tested Eddie Eagle GunSafe® program and the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Hunter Safety In Our Schools program.

Required as the standard for grades K-5, and optional for grades 5-8, the Eddie Eagle GunSafe® program is a firearm accident prevention program developed by a task force made up of educators, school administrators, curriculum specialists, urban housing safety officials, clinical psychologists, law enforcement officials and National Rifle Association firearm safety experts.

The program began in 1988 with the mission of teaching children four simple, easy to remember steps so they know what to do if they come across a gun. In 2015, the NRA introduced a fresh, new Eddie Eagle and added some friends—his Wing Team. Though Eddie has evolved, his mission has not. Eddie and his friends remind children that if they see a gun, they need to **Stop! Don't touch. Run away. Tell a grown-up.**

Required as the standard for grades 9-12, and optional for grades 5-8 under this bill, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks program allows students to gain their Hunter's Safety certification. This stellar program teaches youth in older grades about firearm safety and helps kids understand the practical implications of safe firearm storage and handling whether or not those kids ever choose to participate in the hunting or shooting sports.

The Kansas State Rifle Association believes both programs benefit students and the greater Kansas community and urges the Committee to report SB 116 favorable for passage.

Sincerely,
Moriah

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Executive Director

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