

Kansas Senate

STATE CAPITOL
300 S.W. TENTH AVENUE
TOPEKA, KS 66612
(785) 296-7665
Greg.Smith@Senate.ks.gov



8605 ROBINSON
OVERLAND PARK, KS 66212
913-302-9983

Senator Greg Smith 21st District

Chairman Lynn, Vice Chair Wagle, Ranking Member Holland, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to briefly explain my views on HB 2023.

I have the unique privilege to address this topic from a variety of perspectives. From the age of twenty my employment history has been as a public sector employee. I served ten years in the United State Navy, nearly twenty years as a police officer, and I am a public school teacher in the state of Kansas. I consider public sector service to be a calling. I have never expected to get rich from public sector work. I don't think anyone in the public sector does. If they do feel that way, they are not in the right profession. Public service is, in my opinion, the most rewarding work a person can do.

I am a salaried teacher, not a substitute teacher. Teaching is my profession and has been for the last six years. I teach U.S. History and American Government at the high school level. I am proud that I am a teacher. I come from a family of educators. My father taught at the same school I now teach at for 40 years. I graduated from the school I now teach at. All five of my children have attended the school I teach at. Three have graduated and two are currently students. One is a senior this year and one is a junior. I believe that teaching is a noble profession and that teachers are charged with training the next generation of citizens. It is a difficult and rewarding job.

I have no animosity toward administrators, public education, students or teachers. I do not, however support, nor do I believe, that those in the public sector should be allowed to unionize. I am not a member of the teacher's union, KNEA, yet that organization bargains for my pay, benefits and working conditions. I have no voice in the matter. My interests and needs are not a part of the equation.

The KNEA claims they are "Making Schools Great for Every Child." Yet, my experiences with members have little to do with children and everything to do with teachers. Members of this organization have questioned my children about a vote I have cast in the Legislature or a public policy position I have taken. My children were students in their classroom when these conversations took place. They were not in the context of a history or government class. It was not a great experience for my children.

Unions had no interest in the public sector until their membership numbers declined. History backs this up:

- "All Government employees should realize that the process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service. It has its distinct and insurmountable limitations when applied to public personnel management. The very nature and purposes of Government make it impossible for administrative officials to represent fully or to bind the employer in mutual discussions with Government employee organizations. The employer is the whole people, who speak by means of laws enacted by their representatives in Congress. Accordingly, administrative officials and employees alike are governed and guided, and in many instances restricted, by laws which establish policies, procedures, or rules in personnel matters." President Franklin D. Roosevelt

- "Government workers were making good salaries in 1962 when President Kennedy lifted, by executive order (so much for democracy), the federal ban on government unions. Civil-service regulations and similar laws had guaranteed good working conditions for generations. The argument for public unionization wasn't
- moral, economic, or intellectual. It was rankly political." Jonah Goldberg, National Review Online, Editor-at-large.

And academia has studied the issue:

- "A core problem with public sector unionism is that it creates a uniquely powerful interest group. In theory, bureaucrats are supposed to work for and be accountable to the elected representatives of the people. But suppose those bureaucrats organize into large, well-funded, powerful unions that can tip election results. With very few and very unique exceptions, no workplace in which the employees elect the supervisors functions well for long...In effect, public sector unionism thus means that representatives of the union will often be on both sides of the collective bargaining table. On the one side, the de jure union leaders. On the other side, the bought and paid for politicians. No wonder public sector union wages and benefits are breaking the back of state budgets. They are bargaining with themselves rather than with an arms'-length opponent." Stephen Bainbridge, William D. Warren Professor of Law at UCLA.

Recognizing that they were losing the ability to leverage public policy the unions had to go elsewhere to get members. It was then that the public sector became a palatable area of employment to go after.

Six years ago when I started teaching after a career in law enforcement, I was approached at the new hire breakfast by a member of the teacher's union. They were recruiting new members. I was handed a clipboard, asked to fill out the information/registration card, and told that my dues would be automatically taken from my paycheck each month. When I asked what the dues were, I was told they were \$65. When I asked what I received in return for that money I was told it covered my liability insurance. When I asked what else it provided I was told about reductions in car rental rates, hotel rates, and other consumer savings programs. When I asked what else the money was used for I was told insurance. I declined and handed the clipboard back.

Paycheck protection laws prohibit public employee labor organizations, such as teacher unions, from using political contributions for purposes the employee may not agree with unless the employee makes an affirmative action. This ensures that all political activity conducted by the union is approved by its members, protecting their basic rights of association. This bill will help to put money back into the pockets of teachers, allowing them the choice as to whether or not they wish to donate to union-sponsored political activity. Payroll deduction of PAC donations should not be done by the government. If an employee, public or private sector, wants to contribute to a PAC or any other political organization or candidate is it really that hard to write a check?

Most teachers that I associate with have no deep seated belief in the union or its political agenda. Some don't know that the union has a political agenda and others ignore it because they don't support it but feel pressured to be part of the union. The teachers union has a history of passing resolutions condemning school vouchers, homeschooling, and competency testing for teachers. All of these would be in the best interest of students but not necessarily in the best interest of teachers.

Over 93% of teacher union campaign donations are given to liberal candidates. I do not support liberal policies which is why I do not belong to the union. Financial disclosure records of the union also show that the

leadership of this organization is paid pricy salaries, funded by teachers' dues. Over 300 union officials have six figure salaries.

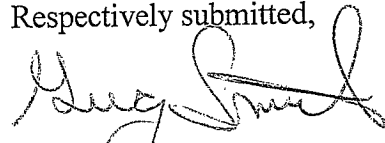
A report from the Heritage Foundation shows that paycheck protection legislation has a clear negative effect on public sector union political contributions. Union campaign donations decreased by approximately 50%. These statistics are hard to negate. When given the choice to donate to union-sponsored political activity, much fewer people chose to funnel this money to the union's political arm showing that many unions are forcing dues-paying members to contribute to causes with which they do not necessarily agree. Many teachers join for the insurance and not for the politics.

I am not a union member and I have insurance. Twice the coverage offered by the union for a third of the price and no money used to lobby in D.C. or Topeka for a political agenda I don't agree with.

Teachers face intense pressure to join the union. I am here to testify today because every one of my colleagues that I spoke with about this legislation expressed approval of it. When asked if they would come and relate their story about the union the first question was would any union representatives be present? When they found out they most likely would be every one of them declined to testify in committee because they did not want to be targeted by union members at work. That is a testament to the power of the union in a right to work state.

I ask that the committee report this bill favorable for passage.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Smith", written in a cursive style.

Greg Smith