

## **Celebrate Freedom Week; Extension of Fund Flexibility; Bullying Policies; HB 2261**

**HB 2261** creates “Celebrate Freedom Week” in public schools for kindergarten and grades one through eight, extends fund flexibility for public school districts, and amends existing law related to school districts’ bullying policies.

### ***Celebrate Freedom Week***

The bill designates the week containing September 17 (or any other full school week as determined by the local school board) as “Celebrate Freedom Week,” during which public schools are required to teach to grades kindergarten through eight the history of the country’s founding, with particular emphasis on the *Declaration of Independence* and the *U.S. Constitution*. The bill prohibits censorship of religious references in the writings of the founding fathers when presented as part of the instruction.

On or before December 31, 2013, the State Board of Education is responsible for adopting rules and regulations to require history and government curriculum for grades kindergarten through eight that includes instruction on the meaning and context of the *Declaration of Independence* and the *U.S. Constitution*, including their relationship to the nation’s diversity by way of immigration, major wars, and social movements in American history. The State Board of Education, along with other volunteers, are required to promote “Celebrate Freedom Week”.

### ***Fund Flexibility***

The bill allows a school district to continue to transfer unencumbered cash balances for the 2013-2014 school year and each school year thereafter for general operating expenses of the district from each of the following funds: at-risk education, bilingual education, contingency reserve, professional development, summer program, one-third of textbook and student materials, one-third of special education, virtual school, vocational education, parent education, and driver training. The maximum amount allowed to be transferred from the unencumbered funds could not exceed \$250 multiplied by the adjusted enrollment of the district.

The bill states the public policy goal of the State of Kansas is at least 65 percent of the aggregate of all unencumbered balances authorized for expenditure by the bill must be expended in the classroom or for instruction (as defined in KSA 72-64c01).

The bill removes any cap on the amount of moneys that could be maintained in the contingency reserve fund. (Prior law allowed a district to keep up to 10 percent of the district’s general fund budget in a contingency reserve fund.)

The bill requires the superintendent of a school district to report the unencumbered balances in each of the funds named in the bill to the local board of education at the board’s July meeting, and to the State Board of Education by July 15 of each year.

## ***Policies Regarding Bullying***

The bill amends the law related to school district policies on bullying. Prior law defined “bullying” as an intentional gesture or threat creating an intimidating environment for a student or staff member. The bill clarifies the definition of “bullying” to mean any threat by a student, staff member, or parent toward a student or by any student, staff member, or parent toward a staff member. The bill defines “parent” to include a guardian, custodian, or other person with authority to act on behalf of a child. The bill defines “staff member” to mean any person employed by the school district. Finally, the bill requires these changes be reflected in the school districts’ policies and plans to address bullying.