

Thomas Prasch  
Topeka, KS  
[tom.prasch@gmail.com](mailto:tom.prasch@gmail.com)  
Written testimony  
HB2428: Oppose

Dear Chairwoman Estes and Members of the Committee on Education:

My comments on HB2428 draw upon my thirty years of experience as a professor of History, although I will emphasize that these are my own views as a citizen and taxpayer of Kansas and not those of Washburn University or any of its constituent elements.

I wish to underline three principal objections to HB2428 in its current form:

First: The bill declares early on (in section I d) that “Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or restrict the academic freedom of faculty,” yet the content of the bill does precisely that. It restricts, in any course required for the degree, discussion of a range of topics and limits the way in which those topics can be discussed, and then it mandates a new general-education course, defining both its content and the ways in which it must be taught. None of that resembles “academic freedom.”

Second: The bill fails to consider the consequences of its provisions on accreditation of programs, and thus it is fiscally irresponsible because it will lead students seeking accredited degrees out of state. There are a variety of programs whose accreditation would be affected by the bill, but my own concern is especially with History/Education programs. Over a third of our majors aim to get licensed to teach secondary education in Kansas, and that is clearly a substantial segment of our student population.

Third: The mandate for a new, required general-education course on “American institutions” is, in multiple ways, an ill-considered intervention in the curricula of Kansas universities. It is unfunded, and nothing in the bill suggests any way to accommodate the requirements of a new course offering. It does not consider what discipline(s) would be responsible for the course. It does not consider whether this would add three hours to graduation requirements or require all graduation programs to reconsider existing requirements to make room for it. And it ignores the fact that existing general-education courses, in both History and Political Science, already offer everything that the new course would mandate be taught.

Given the problems entailed with enforcing these new requirements for Kansas institutions of higher education, I strongly encourage the committee not to send this bill forward.

Sincerely,



Thomas Prasch