

Amber Douglas
Wellington, Kansas
mymitsnu2@yahoo.com
January 21, 2026

Chairman and Members of the Committee
Kansas House Elections Committee
Kansas State Capitol
Topeka, Kansas

Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB2451

Chairman, Vice-Chairman Waggoner, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amber Douglas. I am a parent, taxpayer, and resident of Wellington, Kansas. I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB2451 because I personally experienced what happens when a school district uses public resources to push a bond and there is no clear law or agency willing or able to stop it.

This is not theoretical. I have everything documented and saved, including dates, names, communications, videos, posts, and responses from state agencies.

What My School District Did

In 2025, Wellington USD 353 placed a school bond on the November ballot. Between August and October 2025, the district went beyond neutral information and into advocacy using public resources.

Examples include:

A district-produced promotional video posted on the official "Wellington KS Public Schools" Facebook page on September 24, 2025. In this video, the Board President stated, "If we don't reinvest in our school district, we might as well close this town down." A separate video which included a student encouraging viewers to "vote yes" was also posted on their official Facebook page. That student was filmed inside Wellington High School, during school hours, and the video was posted during school hours which means the district used taxpayer-funded buildings, staff time, and students to promote a ballot issue.

Flyers and large poster boards inside school buildings were labeled "Efficient, Reliable, and Essential." These are not neutral descriptors. They are persuasive value-based words. "Efficient" implies the district is being smart and responsible with money. "Reliable" suggests trustworthiness and security. "Essential" implies that a "yes" vote is necessary or morally required. Together, those words are designed to influence emotions and judgment, not simply provide facts. These materials were displayed in common areas accessible to students, staff, and the public.

District employees posted pro-bond messages during school hours.

On October 29, 2025, Sumner NewsCow published a *district-sponsored* article titled, "Wellington USD 353 Projects the Financial Impacts of \$22.5 Million Bond Proposal." The article used persuasive language like "critical," "significant state aid," and warned of a "greater financial burden if delayed."

All of this was funded, produced, or distributed using taxpayer resources.

What I Tried to Do About It

I did what citizens are supposed to do.

On September 3, 2025, I contacted Superintendent Adam Hatfield and asked that school employees refrain from posting advocacy content during work hours. He acknowledged my concern.

On September 25, 2025, I filed a formal complaint with the Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission (now the Kansas Public Disclosure Commission), naming the board president, superintendent, official district Facebook page, videos, flyers, and posters.

On September 30, 2025, the Commission replied that even if everything I alleged was true, they had no authority or jurisdiction to act because Kansas law does not clearly prohibit public advocacy for bond issues. Their investigator explained that the statutes clearly cover candidates, but not ballot questions, and that no agency has authority to enforce this when it comes to bonds.

On October 30, 2025, I wrote to Representative Paul Waggoner explaining that Kansas citizens have no enforcement mechanism when districts use public resources to push bonds.

On November 4, 2025, I filed a complaint with the Kansas Attorney General outlining the same facts: videos, student advocacy, posters, staff time, district social media, and sponsored media articles. I asked the Attorney General's office to review whether public resources were being misused and to clarify the law.

The reality I learned is simple. You can document it, complain, cite statutes, but no one has clear authority to stop it.

Why HB2451 Matters

My experience proves there is a real gap in Kansas law. Right now, school districts can use public resources to push bonds. Citizens can complain but agencies will say, "We don't have jurisdiction", therefore, voters are left without protection.

HB2451 does something simple and necessary. It makes it clear that public officers and employees cannot use public assets, money, staff time, facilities, or official communication channels to advocate for or against ballot questions, *including* school bonds.

This does not silence anyone and does not prevent information. Districts can still explain what a bond is, what it would fund, what it would cost, and when the vote is. They just cannot tell people how to vote using taxpayer resources.

Why This Is Important

This is not about whether a bond is good or bad and solely about fairness. When government uses public resources to advocate, it creates an uneven playing field where one side has taxpayer money, official branding, staff time, and access to students and families yet and the other side has nothing but personal time and personal money. That is not a fair election nor is it a neutral government. That is not what public trust looks like. I did everything the system tells citizens to do and the system told me, "There is no rule. There is no referee." *HB2451 gives Kansas that referee.*

Closing

I support HB2451 because *I lived through* exactly why it is needed, I proved the enforcement gap exists, I tried every legal avenue available, and I was told (by the state itself) that no one could act.

This bill protects taxpayers, voters, and students from being used as political tools by publicly funded institutions.

Thank you for your time and for working to close this gap in Kansas law.

Respectfully submitted,

Signed by:

Amber Douglas 1/21/2026

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Amber Douglas

Wellington, Kansas



**Vote on
Nov 4th**



USD 353 - WELLINGTON SCHOOLS

BOND

NOV 4

Efficient - Reliable - Essential

* Information provided by USD 353 to inform parents about the November 4 bond election.

Wellington KS Public Schools

Nov 4, 2025 · 🌐

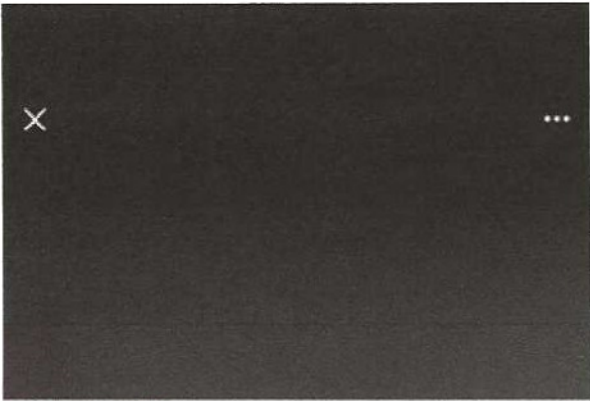
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2 comments

👍 Like

💬 Comment

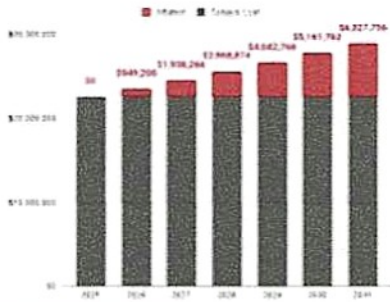
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Why Now?

Waiting Increases Project Costs

Wellington expects 35 year average annual inflation rate of 4.7% for construction costs.



* Annual inflation by USD 352 to inform voters about the November 4 bond election.

Wellington KS Public Schools

Nov 4, 2025 · 🌐

👍👎 10

1 comment 1 share

👍 Like

💬 Comment

🔗 Share

Create
story

Ok gorgeous!!
JD's All
About Home

Jen Aldridge

Richard
Railey



Wellington KS Public Schools

55m · 🌐



On November 4th, the Wellington community will vote on a proposed \$22.6 million general obligation bond issue for USD 353. The proposed bond is designed to fund critical infrastructure improvements across all district schools and facilities. The bond, if approved, would address aging infrastructure, improve learning environments, and increase energy efficiency. Key projects include remodeling the old ag shop at the middle school to enhance ag and other career and technical education programming. Other projects include vital roof and HVAC system replacements and other upgrades around the district. Here is a list of the projects the bond would cover.



The \$22.6 Million Bond will Provide:

Wellington Middle School:

- Remodel Old Ag Shop Classrooms
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Window Curtain Wall on East Side of Cafeteria
- Upgrade District Track

Eisenhower and Kennedy:

- Replace HVAC System with Rooftop Units
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Windows
- New Parking Lot

Lincoln and Washington:

- Install TPO Roof

Other Facilities:

- Replace Windows at District Office
- New Restrooms & Entrances at High School Football Field
- Tennis Court Parking Lot

4:20

100



Wellington KS Public Schools



Posts

About

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On November 4th, the Wellington community will vote on a proposed \$22.6 millio... See more



The \$22.6 Million Bond will Provide:

Wellington Middle School:

- Remodel Old Ag Shop Classrooms
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Window Curtain Wall on East Side of Cafeteria
- Upgrade District Track Facilities
- Pave Gravel Parking Lot
- Replace Theater Seating

Wellington High School:

- Install TPO Roof
- New AC Chillers
- Re-seal Asphalt

Eisenhower and Kennedy:

- Replace HVAC System with Rooftop Units
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Windows
- New Parking Lot

Lincoln and Washington:

- Install TPO Roof

Sumner County Academy:

- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Windows

Other Facilities:

- Replace Windows at District Office
- New Restrooms & Entrances at High School Football Field
- Tennis Court Parking Lot
- Replace End-Of-Life Rooftop Units at Various Schools



inside district office

USD 353 - WELLINGTON SCHOOLS

BOND

Efficient • Reliable • Essential

NOV 4

The \$22.6 Million Bond will Provide:

Eisenhower and Kennedy:

- Replace HVAC System with Rooftop Units
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Windows
- New Parking Lot

Lincoln and Washington:

- Install TPO Roof

Sumner County Academy:

- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Windows

Other Facilities:

- Replace Windows at District Office
- New Restrooms & Entrances at High School Football Field
- Replace/Resurface Tennis Court Parking Lot
- Replace End-Of-Life Rooftop Units at Various Schools

Wellington Middle School:

- Remodel Old Ag Shop Classrooms
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Window Curtain Wall on East Side of Cafeteria
- Upgrade District Track Facilities
- Pave the Gravel Parking Lot
- Replace Theater Seating

Wellington High School:

- Install TPO Roof
- New AC Chillers
- Re-seal Asphalt

State Aid pays 25%

Remodeling Plans for the Old Ag Shop

Stay Informed!

@ Wellington KS Public Schools

* Material produced by USD 353 to inform patrons about the November 4 bond election.

Financial Information

Item	Amount
Proposed Bond Measure (2019-2020)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2020-2021)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2021-2022)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2022-2023)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2023-2024)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2024-2025)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2025-2026)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2026-2027)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2027-2028)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2028-2029)	\$22,600,000
Proposed Bond Measure (2029-2030)	\$22,600,000

State Aid pays 25%

Stay Informed!

BOND

all the

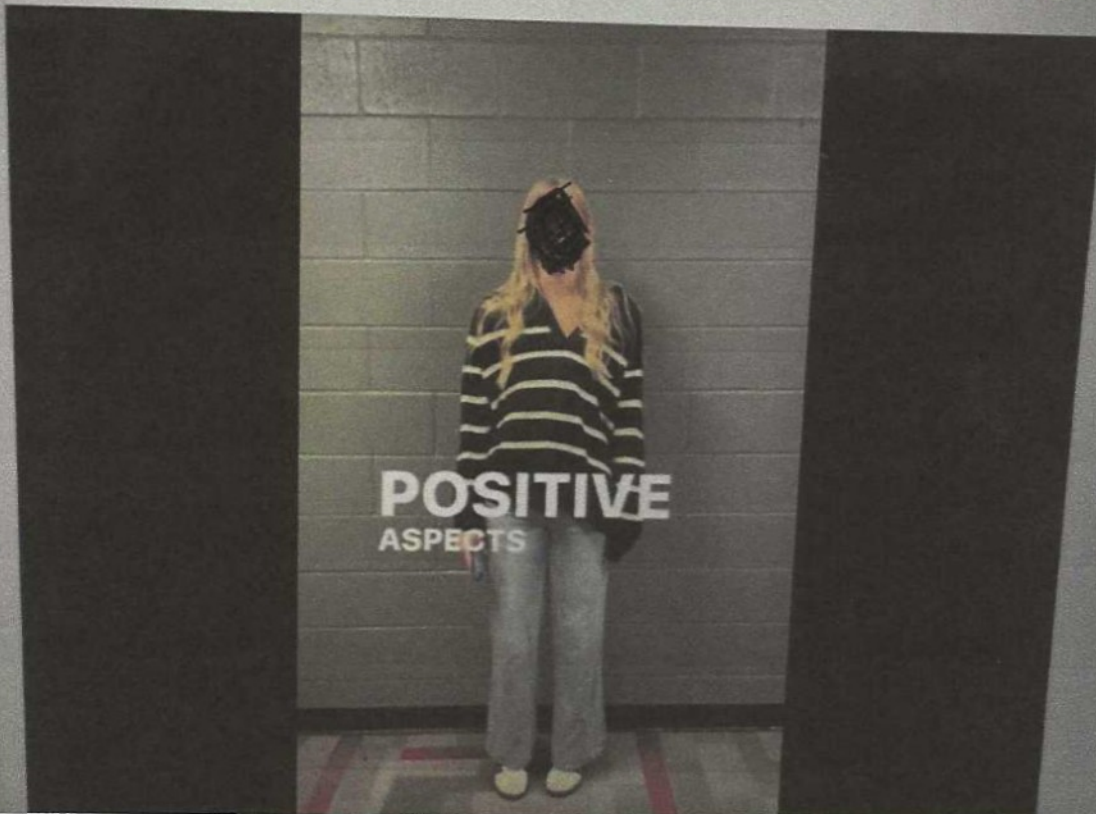


Crusader Radio

1h · 🌐



Thursday, October 9, 2025 at 2:16 PM and learn about the positive aspects of the upcoming



all photos



WELLINGTON SCHOOLS
BOND

Efficient - Reliable - Essential

NOV 4

On November 4, the community will vote on a \$22.6 million **bond** election to provide students with the following school improvements:

Wellington High School:

- Install TPO Roof
- New AC Chillers
- Re-seal Asphalt

Other Facilities:

- Replace Windows at District Office
- New Restrooms & Entrances at High School Football Field
- Tennis Court Parking Lot
- Replace End-Of-Life Rooftop Units at Various Schools

Wellington Middle School:

- Remodel Old Ag Shop Classrooms
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Window Curtain Wall on East Side of Cafeteria
- Upgrade District Track Facilities
- Pave Gravel Parking Lot
- Replace Theater Seating

Eisenhower and Kennedy:

- Replace HVAC System with Rooftop Units
- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Windows
- New Parking Lot

Lincoln and Washington:

- Install TPO Roof

Sumner County Academy:

- Install TPO Roof
- Replace Windows

Stay Informed!

Scan the QR Code and follow us on Facebook.

More details are coming soon!



Material produced by USD 353 to inform patrons about the November 4 bond election.

@ Wellington KS Public Schools



flyers ↑

inside school



The \$22.6 Million Bond will Provide:

CONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION

- Classroom Addition
- Kitchen Addition
- Restroom Addition
- New Flooring

WATER AND SEWERAGE

- Sewer Main Replacement
- Sewer Lateral Replacement

STUDENT LEARNING

- Student Learning
- Student Learning

OTHER PROJECTS

- Other Projects
- Other Projects

REMODELING PLANS FOR THE OLD AG SHOP

- Remodeling Plans for the Old Ag Shop
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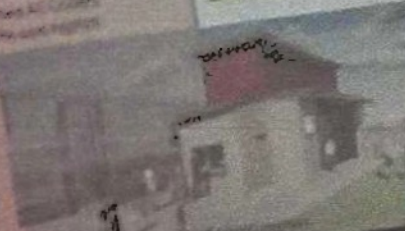
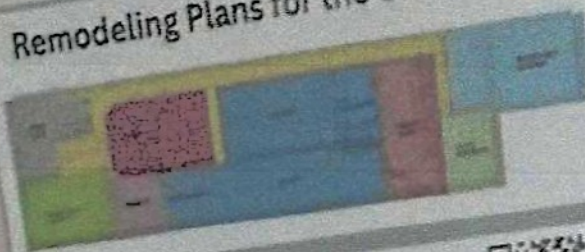
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Remodeling Plans for the Old Ag Shop



Stay
Informed!



Wellington KS Public Schools

What All USD Employee's Should Know About the Upcoming Bond Campaign

At all times:

- Be courteous, considerate, and positive to all, regardless of perceived voting indications of the patron/parent.
- Be very knowledgeable about the bond scope and schedule. Learn the facts from district leaders, not the media, social media, or others.
- Be open and honest when visiting with patrons related to the project scope and the tax impact. Don't embellish or use scare tactics.
- Always forward patron questions that you can't answer to the proper district employee. Don't try to answer a question if you are not 100% sure of the proper response.
Credibility of information is crucial in bond issues. Be sure the answer you give is accurate. Don't be afraid to tell someone you'll find out the answer and get back to them.
- If you don't feel that you have the information you need, let your principal or superintendent know right away. It is our intent to keep you well-informed.

Where can I find the district's educational information about the bond election?

- Visit the district's website:

https://www.usd353.com/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1746935&type=d&pREC_ID=2684141



Scan the QR Code:

- Follow us on Facebook: @Wellington KS Public Schools

- Follow us on Facebook: @Wellington KS Public Schools
- Obtain copies of any handouts from the district office.

While “On the clock”:

- It is OK to remind Parents to register to vote.
- It is OK to tell them to remember to vote. It is critical that parents show up and vote.
- It is OK to answer questions about the **bond** with students or parents. However, you must be neutral in your feelings and statements. You should not advocate for a “yes” or “no” vote while on the clock.
- Do not make “vote yes/no” statements, wear “vote yes/no” stickers, or send “vote yes/no” emails or social media posts regardless of what account you are using, while on the clock.
- Material sent home in backpacks is OK as long as it is informational only and produced by the School District. Only send out official information produced and provided to you by the district.

While “Off the clock”:

- You are free to do as you please off school property. No restrictions.
- While on school property it is best to always assume you are “on the clock” and act accordingly, even if you are not.
- Remember, if it is not obvious that you are “off the clock”, state it before you advocate publicly.
- Most of all, use good judgment as to when to advocate while “off the clock” so that your “clock status” issue is never mistaken or it becomes the focus.
 - *This is particularly important in this age of social media.*
- You are free to attend community meetings/organizations, including any meetings to inform patrons/groups about the referendum scope and facts or to advocate patrons to vote a certain way.

Things to Avoid:

Things to Avoid

- Do NOT use district owned materials and equipment to help create information to persuade patrons to vote in a particular manner.
- Don't use your district email to try to persuade people to vote in a certain way.
- Provide "in-kind" services to help promote or defeat an election.
- Present a pro- or anti-referendum message at meetings held during the day in district facilities. However, if you are asked your personal opinion you can respond accordingly, but be careful.

