



Opponent Testimony on SB 47

Requiring school districts to publicly list the names and email addresses of current school board members, authorizing local school board members to add new items to board meeting discussions, ask questions or engage in discussion with members of the public and access school property, authorizing members of the public to address school boards at board meetings and authorizing payment of annual dues to any not-for-profit organization that provides services to member school districts.

February 11, 2025

Judith Deedy on behalf of Game On for Kansas Schools

Chair Erickson, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 47 on behalf of Game On for Kansas Schools, a grassroots public education advocacy organization. As Kansas parents and community members who support public education, we oppose SB 47 as a blatant attempt by a special interest group to change Kansas school board policy in ways that would make it easier to harass school board members, usurp local authority over school board policies and operations and override the will of local citizens by giving minority members the ability to hijack board operations.

This bill was requested by Mike O’Neal on behalf of the Kansas Policy Institute, a private special interest group, and is clearly designed to make it easier for them to market their School Board Resource Center to current school board members. The short title of the bill mentions listing names and email addresses of school board members, but the bill goes much further than that. It actually requires each school district to send the list of current members and the members' email addresses to the state department of education (KSDE) and requires KSDE to maintain a **public** database of all current members of the boards of education of all school districts and their email addresses and **post it on the KSDE website**. There is no reasonable state or citizen interest that is served by requiring a convenient statewide database of email addresses of all local school board members. If a citizen wants to reach out to their local school board members, they go to their local school district website and find how to reach board members. They have no need to contact every board member across the state. KPI may

want the convenience of going directly to a database created for them to make it easier for them to market their own school board entity, but they have paid staff and can go to the trouble of collecting that information themselves. The statewide publication of board member email addresses also makes it easier for people to harass board members who live outside their home communities. It's hard enough to get qualified people to serve as local board members. The legislature should not make it easier to harass them.

This bill also usurps local control by mandating certain board policies and procedures that appear to make it easier for individual board members to disrupt board meetings and hijack the agenda. As parents and community members, we respect the authority of local boards to determine how they set their own agendas and conduct their own meetings. We have multiple ways to engage with our local boards and we support boards maintaining rules that allow them to conduct their necessary business of overseeing our districts as they see fit. We are all too familiar with the ways individuals without a majority on the board have sought to impose their own agendas. We respect the fact that local boards are locally elected and create their own policies for conducting their business. The legislature should respect that and not cater to the whims of a special interest organization that is frustrated it hasn't been able to get more of its politically aligned candidates elected to school boards.

Supporters of the Kansas Policy Institute and its affiliated School Board Resource Center who don't like the policies of their local boards can reach out to their elected members to request they enact changes, elect different school board members, or run for the boards themselves, just like the rest of us Kansas citizens. They should not be entitled to create legislation as an end run around normal processes.

We urge you to oppose SB 47.