

February 11, 2013

Testimony on Senate Bill 109

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Ethics, Elections, and Local Government Committee,

I am Gene Johnson, Superintendent of the Shawnee Mission School District, 512.

I appear today as an opponent of Senate Bill 109. The bill is overly broad in the prohibitions it imposes and the exceptions that are included are too confusing and narrow to provide any assurance the publicly elected members of the Shawnee Mission School District and myself can properly conduct the business of our taxpayers and patrons.

If we are prohibited from advocacy or lobbying either through contract or a staff person, and our professional associations are excluded as well there, are at least two effects. First, the patrons and taxpayers of our district will be denied access and the ability to effectively communicate with our education partners, the State of Kansas. Second, tremendous amounts of staff time and expertise will be expended on legislative policy and budget issues and that will only drive up administrative costs and deflect even greater amounts of resources from our mission: the classroom.

Finally, as all other levels of government are urging cooperation and greater communication, Senate Bill 109 has the opposite effect. There is no function of state government more complex than education and school finance and expertise and the open exchange of information is essential. Senate Bill 109 stops my elected Board from serving the needs of our patrons and taxpayers at the state level where almost all policy and funding decisions are made.

Thank you for your time. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.