



**Olathe School District
Testimony provided by Dr. Gary George
Senate Bill 515
February 6, 2008**

We are present today as a neutral party with respect to Senate Bill 515, but we do have some concerns with those sections of the bill that relate to construction of new schools.

At the outset, let me be clear that the Olathe School District is a "green" district. We recognize our social responsibility to provide energy efficient school buildings. We have had an energy management program in place for 15 years. During that time we have "cost avoided" over \$13M in utility expenses. We have been recognized as a leader in this area. We are constructing our new elementary schools to meet the LEED certification requirements. In addition, six of our schools have received the Energy Star awards from the Environmental Protection Agency. We purchase computers that have the Energy Star certification. Our energy manager is involved in new construction planning. We are experimenting with "green" custodial chemicals. We have recycling bins at virtually all schools for both school and neighborhood use.

As indicated above, we are very supportive of energy conservation measures. However, we do have several concerns with the sections of SB515 that deal with school district energy efficient construction and use.

1. The Olathe School District is growing rapidly and currently constructs more buildings at a faster rate than any other district in the state. The provisions of this bill are of critical importance to us. The tax payers of high growth school districts, such as Olathe, will bear a disproportionate share of the cost of compliance with this legislation. The lack of clarity on some issues, the impact on existing bond issues, the potential impact on sites already acquired, and the cost of compliance create significant concerns for us and our patrons.
2. The Secretary of Administration is to develop rules and regulations for new construction, but there is no timeline of when these rules and regulations will be completed or if any input from school districts will be permitted.

3. There is no provision in the bill for the state to provide technical assistance for school districts.
4. The bill requires regulation of external water use. It is not clear how, or if, this will impact building sites our board of education has already acquired.
5. The Olathe School District passed a \$138M bond issue on October 15, 2007. Cost projections for this bond issue were completed in the winter and spring of 2007. This bond issue will cover three to four years of construction. However, SB515 calls for the new requirements to go into effect in July 2009. This will mean expensive change orders that will be borne by our taxpayers. There should be a provision in the bill that the new regulations apply only to construction funded by bond issues that occur in the future.
6. It is not clear how the new requirements would apply to renovation of existing buildings and additions to older buildings.
7. The method of determining "cost effective" measures is unknown.
8. Finally, the Olathe Board of Education has taken legislative positions on local control and unfunded mandates. This bill is in conflict with the Board's position on these issues.

In summary, we suggest that the school energy section of SB515 be amended to address the concerns raised or be deleted from the bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.