

Kansas Peace Officers' Association



INCORPORATED

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Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee In Support of HB2503

March 4, 2016

Chairman Ryckman and Committee members,

Good afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today regarding HB 2503, as proposed legislation for funding the Kansas Highway Patrol. Today I come before you as Shawnee County Sheriff Herman Jones on behalf of the Kansas Peace Officers Association and a former member of the Kansas Highway Patrol. Previous to my current position, I served nearly 21 years in two capacities with the Highway Patrol; ten years as a State Trooper in Wichita and an administrator at General Headquarters here in Topeka.

Over the years, I have witnessed and experienced the challenges of personnel shortages while serving the citizens of this great state. During my years as a trooper I had the occasion to patrol the streets and highways in one of the largest metropolitan areas Kansas has to offer; Wichita. My primary duties entailed traffic safety yet on many instances I was called upon to assist the local law enforcement agencies with traffic and criminal investigations. There were times when I worked with only one or two troopers for a shift. Basically my day entailed that I go from one accident to another due to the lack of personnel on duty. Moreover, there is a correlation to law enforcement presence and public safety.

Not much has changed since those days of past. Today, as an administrator of one of the largest sheriff's office in the state I deal with some of the same limited resource of staff. In short, I rely on the Highway Patrol to augment several of our operations in Shawnee County just like many law enforcement agencies across the state. I am fortunate to have the General Headquarters and a Troop Headquarters in my county yet there are counties within a short drive from the Capitol building that don't have any troopers assigned to a respective county due to their personnel shortages. Subsequently, Highway Patrol response time to critical incidents is increased.

Highway Patrol Superintendent Bruce and his personnel have assisted many agencies in numerous ways. Here are a few examples when Shawnee County Sheriff's Office has benefited from their assistance. I have called upon the Highway Patrol to assist with weight limit enforcement to help slow the rate of deterioration of the Willard bridge in west Shawnee County. Secondly, my agency has called upon the Highway Patrol Air Unit to help with the apprehension of criminal subjects from pursuits. This unit serves as the only means of law enforcement air support throughout the state. Additionally, their Breath Alcohol Unit provides needed resources for local agencies with DUI check lanes and apprehension of drunk drivers; the Patrol's Canine program provides instructors, trainer and consultants for local law enforcement canine programs. Our world has changed dramatically as we rely on these valuable resources in effort to safe guard the citizens of Kansas.

Needless to say, there are many more statewide programs and functions of the Highway Patrol that are carried out daily yet they all need personnel to perform these tasks successfully. Without the constant presence of law enforcement, accidents and criminal activity levels seem to increase. Basically, “out of sight, out of mind.”

In closing, I believe the general public will reap the benefit of having more law enforcement presence on the highways, more enforcement generally equates to safer roadways. As well, local law enforcement will benefit as well. Public safety is the key.

Herman Jones, Sheriff, Shawnee County
KPOA Legislative Committee Chair