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Testimony on HB 2426
House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
By Gary Meagher, County Administrator
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Chairman Hutton and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony as I strongly urge you to not support HB 2426. This is the KPERS legislation that changes the computation of final average salaries for members that joined before July 1, 1993. I am not able to attend the hearing today, but I wish to express my concerns on behalf of the KPERS members employed by Reno County that will be affected if this legislation become law.

Reno County has 389 employees when fully staffed, of which 40 are members of KPERS that joined before 1993. We consistently have eight to sixteen positions open at any given time. Many of the positions are vacant for many weeks because we struggle to fill positions. We have had one department director position open for over two years because there are so few people in this region with the required skills and we are not able to compete with the private sector salaries for a person that has the experience that is needed.

When I began my career in local government I soon realized that I could earn more money in the private sector, but the public sector offered good retirement benefits. Over the last several years that has changed. The changes in KPERS benefits over the last few years have made it very challenging to attract and retain qualified and experienced employees. The latest legislative proposals have spurred a record number of employees to contact our Human Resources Department to inquire about their retirement benefits. This includes many highly skilled employees and senior managers.

As an administrator, I am very concerned that if HB 2426 becomes law, many of our senior employees will exercise their retirement option, soon after. Many of these people hold high ranking, or highly skilled positions within our organization, and they have a wealth of institutional knowledge.

From a management perspective, it is much better to experience a slow, steady turnover of employees than to see some of the organizations most seasoned staff leave the workforce within a short period. After talking to several people, I strongly believe that HB 2426 has the potential to make this happen, if passed.

I think that it is important to point out that those who joined KPERS before 1993 are an ever shrinking group that have been promised, and have planned on, the benefit that will be taken away if HB2426 passes. I urge you not to change this benefit for these employees that have dedicated many years of their careers to public service in Kansas.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gary Meagher
County Administrator