

House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2426

Kevin Florey: President; KS State Firefighters Assn (KSFFA)

May 11th, 2015

Good afternoon Chairman Hutton and fellow committee members. My name is Kevin Flory, and I am the President of the Kansas State Firefighters Association (KSFFA). Our association represents the approximately 16,000 members of the Kansas Fire Service both paid and volunteer firefighter and chief officer. I am writing today to ask you to oppose HB 2426.

Many of you might be asking why is the fire service would be opposed to this bill when the bill exempts KPF? Well, first of all, we have yet to get a clear direction that KPF members ARE NOT impacted by this bill by reference of some if its language. KPERS staff and legislators cannot agree on who exactly is included and who is not. That is the first issue we would respectfully ask be clarified for our membership.

Our next reason for opposition is that not only does this affect our full-time fire service members in the state, but a large percentage of our states' volunteer firefighters come from some type of public service background. Whether it be school teacher, KDOT employee, County worker, law enforcement, County ambulance service worker, etc,. As such, many of our 16,000 firefighters of this state have a stake in the KPERS system in one form or another. It is our position that this bill compromises their retirement benefits. It is the State going back on its word from 1993 when original language was passed that grandfathered in KPERS employees prior to that date who could get their leave accruals counted towards their final average salary. Employees after that date are entering the system fully aware that that benefit is not available to them. It is poor practice at best to wait until the eleventh hour of a person's career to change what they have believed their retirement benefits would be. In many cases they have not enough working time left to try and recover that lost dollar amount they were "promised" by the state in 1993 they would have available.

The Kansas State Firefighters Association would respectfully ask that HB 2426 not be approved by this committee. Thank you.

Kevin L. Flory

President, KSFFA