

Before the State of Kansas House Judiciary Committee

Chairman: Hon. John Barker

Vice Chairman: Hon. Charles Macheers

Ranking Minority Member: Hon John Carmichael

March 3, 2016

Ladies and Gentlemen of the House Judiciary Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to address you on the issue of judicial salary increases. Just for background, I am Steven Hornbaker, District Judge in Junction City. I practiced law in Junction City for 27 years and was appointed by Gov. Graves as District Judge in 2000. So for 43 years I have been working in Junction City in law related fields. I am a lifelong resident of Kansas and of Junction City. I was privileged to work along side your Chairman-- Hon. John Barker who worked in the same Judicial District as I. I say that because I learned from him and respect him as a Judge and now as a legislator.

We are here to today to discuss Judicial Salaries. I do not speak for the Kansas District Judges association although I am a member. Rather, I speak for the hard working and oft maligned District Judges on the first rung of the Judicial ladder. Those folks who hear literally thousands of disputes and decide them based upon the rule of law. Uninfluenced by politics and press influence. Crimes from shoplifting to multiple murder and civil cases involving 10 dollars to billions of dollars; abused children; divorce and child custody disputes and thousands of foreclosures on families homes. It is a never ending litany of dispute and misery decided without fanfare or publicity. The rule of law is why we consider ourselves civilized members of the human race.

So, a gentle reminder--you make the law! But without the judiciary to interpret and enforce that law then it is of no effect. Truly a beautiful system that we all enjoy and appreciate.

So what's the point? Most of you have spouses and children. We all wish for the best for them and want them to succeed. We want our children to give us grandchildren and we want them to be able to have the where-with-all to afford them. So just consider your child or grandchild having a job, trying to succeed and prosper and not receiving a pay increase for 8 years. Well, number one, you would tell them to quit and find a better job...long before 8 years had passed. Because their boss has no respect for them and certainly cares not a bit about their well being. You may say, well, Judges are grown men and women and successful and don't need the income. Understand most judges gave up lucrative practices in law to serve the public as a judge--I certainly did. But the present pay will not continue to attract the kind of people you or I know are needed as Judges. Right now, a young man in my District

just was appointed by Governor Brownback. He will be a fine Judge and we are lucky that he is dedicated. But he is 40 years old and has two children age 9 and 13. He will and should expect to be treated fairly.

The proposed pay raise is about 18% of salary for District Judges which sound like a lot until one considers that the increase is over an 8 years period. That would equate to a wage earner starting as \$10.00 an hour 8 years ago, doing a good job and now (8 years later) making \$11.80 an hour. Good luck keeping employees treating them like that!

The Judiciary has not been treated fairly or evenly. Considering the education, the ability to make income in the private sector and the present costs of education, Judges are third class citizens. We need to think, not about current disputes with the supreme court, but the future of our State. Our Country's founding fathers considered not only the present but into the future to formulate a three tiered system which has served us well. That system needs to include a competent judiciary.