

To: Chairman Les Donovan, Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee
From: Andi Pawlowski
Subject: Oppose SB 316

Chairman Donovan,

I am opposed to the “tax lid bill” passed by the legislature last session and I am also opposed to making this mechanism any harder for the cities of Kansas to implement.

By profession I am a Realtor. I have been licensed since 1987 and I have been a Broker since 1990. I have been a city councilmember in Lansing since 2002 when I was appointed to fill an empty seat and I have been elected 4 times since.

To say I am conflicted is an understatement. My professional association has taken a stand to support this legislation. I can see the numbers they are using, and understand the thought process, but I strongly disagree with it. The reality of my time on the Lansing City Council tells a different story.

Most cities plan for large projects and spending. They bond those projects for many years. The governing bodies are elected to provide the citizens with the cities and amenities they want and choose to support.

In Lansing we have a little different story than most other cities. We have very little commercial development. Our major employers are the State and Federal Government. We are 20 minutes from The Legends and not much further from Zona Rosa on the Missouri side. We have tried to be proactive and attract new businesses, but we have not been successful. Those businesses know our residents have no choice but to drive to them. Former short sighted decisions on infrastructure deferrals are being dealt with by the current city staff and governing body. We will very soon have one of the highest sewer rates in the area because of “deferred maintenance”. Our largest user is playing hard ball with raising their rates.

We have made staffing changes resulting in savings in both salary and benefits. We are currently revamping our budget process with the end goal of being able to keep our valuable employees and provide the services our residents expect.

About 10 years ago we bought 126 acres to provide a park for our community. The **Kansas City Star** sighted lack of park space as a negative for Lansing. We have not been able to proceed with any plans for ball fields or even soccer fields, because of budget concerns. With no growth in our community, we can’t build it and with no amenities, we can’t attract new residents.

Our sales tax dollars go to Wyandotte, Johnson and Platte Counties.

The frustrations I have with these bills and frankly, with my legislators, are we are not Johnson, Wyandotte, Sedgwick or Shawnee County. We have a county of 80,000 that is largely rural or dependent on non-tax paying agencies for jobs. We have no tax paying industry. Our hands are tied when it comes to providing for our residents. It is property tax, only. I personally fight like crazy to keep our mil levy down. When push comes to shove and we have to fix our roads, more than the yearly maintenance, or provide a raise/pay for insurance increases for our staff, we have no choice.

Look at what you are asking small cities to live with. What is the impact of the COLA on Lansing’s budget? How far will \$50,000 go? It doesn’t go very far with a major road or bridge failure.

When the legislature stopped sending the cities LAVTR and Revenue Sharing funds, we had to make those up in other ways, which was in property tax increases. I asked my Senator to start showing the amount of money the state had removed from the cities, not just showing how much the cities had increased property taxes. I have not seen those numbers from him, yet.

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Mill Levy	23.044	24.388	29.622	30.607
Assessed Valuation	31,820,814	35,075,398	38,267,054	40,734,530
Value of 1 Mill	31,821	35,075	38,267	40,735

State Assistance

City County Revenue

Sharing	\$63,426.30	\$64,127.16	\$33,837.86	\$0
LAVTR	\$54,402.51	\$43,258.37	\$44,643.62	\$0
TOTAL	\$117,828.81	\$107,385.53	\$78,481.48	\$0

Mill Equivalent	3.7 Mills	3.06 mills	2.05 mills
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What would be considered a “rounding error” for most large cities makes a huge impact in a city like Lansing. In today’s dollars, a mil is equivalent to about \$75,000.

Please consider what you are doing to smaller cities in Kansas when you make these decisions. I understand you are talking about large amounts of money in Johnson County cities. Deal with them separately. Please.

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