

Senate Commerce Committee

Testimony in Support of HB 2391

Secretary Jim Clark, Department of Administration

March 31, 2015

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2391 regarding hiring authority for state agencies.

The measure that you have before you today is the work product of several months of discussion among Cabinet secretaries, Department of Administration officials and human resource staff across state agencies. The legislation is designed to provide greater flexibility for state agencies to fill critical positions and to provide opportunities for employees to advance in their careers.

Central to providing greater flexibility to agencies in hiring and staffing are the provisions of this bill that would expand the authority with regard to agencies' ability to hire unclassified employees. This is not a new concept to state government and we have seen in recent years the movement from the classified ranks to unclassified in a variety of agencies and positions. The provisions in HB 2391 would definitively state that agency heads have the authority to determine which positions should be in the unclassified service. However, no current employee would be forced to become unclassified. Let me repeat: this is purely a voluntary move for current employees.

We feel that giving agencies this flexibility will allow them to improve their hiring practices and provide them with the capability to fill critical vacancies in a timely manner when qualified candidates are present. It will also allow for positions to be tailored to the demands of the agency as well as the particular skills and abilities of the employee which can both often be constrained by the limitations and inflexibility of the classified system, often to the detriment of the agency's mission.

We believe that this legislation, coupled with other steps being taken by the Department of Administration, will significantly enhance our human resources policies and move the State of Kansas more in line with private sector practices. It will provide the necessary flexibility to state agencies to fill positions to satisfy their mission and be better stewards with taxpayer resources.

Thank you for your consideration of this measure and I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Jim Clark
Secretary, Department of Administration