



February 5, 2015

## **Testimony in Support of SB 42 – Reporting of Public Funds Used in Lobbying**

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.

On behalf of thousands of Americans for Prosperity members across Kansas, thank you for this opportunity to voice our support for Senate Bill 42, a good government transparency bill that would require disclosure of public funds used for lobbying.

Each and every Kansan, either through sales taxes, property taxes, or income taxes, is funding governmental entities that engage in lobbying. There are more than 3800 units of local government in the State of Kansas. Of those, more than a thousand are counties, cities and school districts. The manner in which these units of government spent tax dollars is of great importance to Kansas taxpayers, and every Kansan interested in effective government.

Senate Bill 42 is a step forward in providing information that is critical to effective government oversight by citizens, media and elected officials. Through our current system of Lobbyist reporting requirements, Kansans can easily identify expenditures by all lobbyists for the benefit of individual elected officials.

However, this requirement only gives Kansans a partial picture what is happening. To truly understand the operation and provide oversight to units of local government, Kansans need clear and accurate information detailing the amount of tax money spent for lobbying purposes. Only then, will Kansans be able to make informed decisions and provide informed input to their local elected officials on budget priorities.

Using our current lobbyist reporting system will provide accurate information for constituents, increase transparency of government spending, at minimal cost to state agencies or local government entities. This cost effectiveness is reflected in the Fiscal note for SB 42.

Some local government entities engage in lobbying activities directly, many others participate in lobbying activities through secondary organizations. It seems unlikely that the elected officials responsible for approving local government budgets have a clear idea of how much they are spending on lobbying through membership expenses. Citizens at large certainly do not have visibility on tax dollars ultimately used for lobbying efforts.

Senate Bill 42 fails to address this issue. Therefore, we recommend that following change to the definition of public funds in section 1(c)(3) of the bill:

(3) "Public funds" means money appropriated by the state or any of its subdivisions having the authority to levy and collect taxes *or membership dues or any other type of financial support to an association that employs or hires a lobbyist who is engaged in lobbying on behalf of a public entity as defined in Sec 1(c)(1).*

All of us are required, under penalty of law, to pay to support the operation of multiple government entities. By virtue of that requirement, lobbyists for government entities are not representing the elected officials or public employees in a unit of government. They are, in fact, representing and speaking on behalf of each and every taxpayer and resident of a county, city or school district.

Kansas has a proud history of providing open and accurate information regarding government operations, but is currently one of the minority of states with no mechanism to ensure voters have visibility on how much their local governments are spending on lobbying efforts.

It is time to move forward. With the addition of the proposed language, Americans for Prosperity-Kansas supports this step forward for good government and transparency.

Rodger Woods  
Americans for Prosperity

rwoods@afphq.org  
(316) 617-7833