

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mark Parkinson at 9:00 a.m. on January 11, 1996, in Room 531-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Mike Heim, Legislative Research Department  
Emalene Correll, Legislative Research Department  
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes  
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Senator Bill Wisdom  
Mayor Carol Marinovich, Kansas City, Kansas  
Kevin Kelly, Citizen's Task Force on Consolidation  
Forrest L. Rhea, United We Stand America  
Rev. C.L. Bacchus, Kansas City, Kansas  
Cheryl Sachen, League of Women Voters of Kansas City  
Bert Cantwell, Kansas City Kansas Area Chamber of Commerce

Others attending: See attached list

**SB 218: Concerning the consolidation of the governing bodies of Kansas City, Kansas, and Wyandotte County, Kansas; designating the territory within the boundaries of Wyandotte County as an urban area for the purpose of giving to such county and urban area certain powers of local government; authorizing the adoption of the provisions of this act by the electors of the Wyandotte County urban area.**

**Senate Bill 218** was carried over from the 1995 legislative session. The Chairman explained that **SB 218** would allow a vote by citizens to consolidate services in Wyandotte County. He noted that only proponents would be testifying at this meeting. Testimony from opponents was scheduled to be heard Tuesday, January 16. A copy of a bill draft, reflecting the changes proposed by the task force which met during the 1995 interim, had been distributed. He asked Ms. Kiernan to explain the bill.

Ms. Kiernan said the provisions of the bill would apply to the Wyandotte County urban area only after the question of its adoption was submitted to and approved by a majority of the qualified electors of the area, voting at an election called for such purpose. She noted that Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, would remain separate entities; only the governing bodies would be consolidated. If the provisions were approved by the electors, the governing body of the Wyandotte County urban area would consist of a city-county executive to be elected by the county at large and a seven-member city-county legislature to be elected from established districts. The city-county manager would appoint all other nonelective officers and heads of departments of the county and city. Further, the city-county executive and the city-county legislature would appoint a Wyandotte County urban area local government efficiency and consolidation commission. Kansas City, Kansas, would be considered a mayor-council city, and the city-county executive would be considered as the mayor.

Senator Bill Wisdom, sponsor of the bill, expressed his support for the provisions in the draft presented by Ms. Kiernan and supported substituting it for the original bill drafted for the 1995 legislative session. In his opinion, both Kansas City and Wyandotte County would support the bill. Furthermore, he felt the bill would bring Kansas City, Kansas, and the Wyandotte County Commission together whereas other attempts thus far had not resulted in an agreement.

Mayor Carol Marinovich, Kansas City, Kansas, testified in support consolidation of Kansas City, Kansas, and Wyandotte County governments as a tool to bring a more sound and progressive government to her community. She presented two proposed amendments. (Attachment 1)

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT, Room 531-N Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m. on January 11, 1996.

The Chairman confirmed with Mayor Marinovich that the bill would consolidate services which would result in saving money. She added that it would also provide for unified leadership which is an important element in the consolidation of departments. Staff noted that the bill is unique in that it is consolidating governing bodies for two separate entities. The Chairman commented that, in actuality, the bill deals with a change in government structure rather than consolidation of governments. Mayor Marinovich responded that the consolidation provided in the bill would result in unified leadership which could lead to true consolidation. She stated that consolidation under the provisions of present law has not occurred because of an impasse.

Sen. Ranson expressed her agreement with indications that consolidation is not a simple task or easily accomplished. She asked staff if there are alternatives for legislative action. Staff responded that statutory authority is needed for actual city and county consolidation; and at present such authority does not exist. If such a statute were enacted, statewide application could be challenged.

Kevin Kelly, Chairman of the Citizen's Task Force on Consolidation, reported that the task force recommended by a 7-2 vote that the Kansas City Council and the Wyandotte County Commission be replaced by a city-county legislature, professional manager and an executive elected countywide. (Attachment 2)

Forrest L. Rhea, United We Stand America, testified in support of consolidation of the Kansas City, Kansas, and Wyandotte County governments as a chance to have a more responsible, accountable and cheaper form of government. (Attachment 3) He also expressed his support of the task force's recommendations.

Rev. C.L. Bacchus from Kansas City, Kansas, spoke in support of the proposed consolidation from the standpoint of the morale of the community. In his opinion, the proposed consolidation would have the effect of giving hope for progress in a united way to a community where the attitude has been divided. It would offer hope that there is a process that offers a united effort by each "turf." Rev. Bacchus concluded that the community needed to live together or sink together. At present, he believed the community was in a "sink" mode.

Cheryl Sachen, President of the League of women Voters of Kansas City, Kansas, supported the consolidation effort as a means to provide a framework on which the citizens of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, could build a structure over time which is beneficial to its needs. (Attachment 4)

Bert Cantwell, appearing on behalf of the Kansas City Kansas Area Chamber of Commerce, testified in support of Senator Wisdom's consolidation legislation as a unified approach to solve the many problems facing the area. (Attachment 5)

There being no further time, the Chairman announced that the remaining proponents of the bill would be able to present testimony either January 16 or January 17 and that notification of the date would be published.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 1996.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: January 11, 1996

NAME	REPRESENTING
JOHN CAPPAS	KANSAS CITY KANSAN
Don Motee	League of KS Municipalities
KATHY QUINN	KSHB-TV 41
Ed Dawson - city adm.	city of Edwardsville
Phil Tubogyan - mayor	" " "
Richard Kaysinski	WY Co. Commissioner
J. White	KCK
Steve Miley	KC STAR
Kevin Kelley	Task force on Consolidation
MIKE JACOBI	PRIVATE CITIZEN
Robert Stuart	WY Co. Counselor
Billy McAndrew	Wyandotte County, Ks.
Patricia Yungit	League of Women Voters of Kansas City, Kansas
Cheryl Sachin	League of Women Voters of KCK
Shirley Mingin	WY Co.
Jay Hoet	KCKS WYCO
Tom D. Trable	KCKs. Chamber
Don Denny	City of KCK
Councilman Tom Brans	

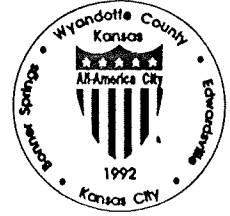




Executive Chamber  
One McDowell Plaza

# City of Kansas City, Kansas

Carol Marinovich, Mayor



Kansas City, Kansas 66101  
Phone (913) 573-5010

January 11, 1996

Senator Mark Parkinson  
Senate Committee on Local Government  
Statehouse Capitol - Room 128 South  
Topeka, KS 66612

## RE: CONSOLIDATION OF KANSAS CITY, KANSAS AND WYANDOTTE COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

Dear Chairperson Parkinson and Members of the Senate Committee:

I am Carol Marinovich, Mayor of Kansas City, Kansas. It is an honor to be here today and speak on the issue of the consolidation of Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County governments.

I was elected Mayor of Kansas City, Kansas on the platform of change. I believe change, when focused solely on what matters most for the betterment of the community, creates hope and opportunity for our community's future.

The Kansas City, Kansas City Council and I are committed to seeking ambitious and progressive initiatives which will build a new vision of where we want Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County to be five, ten, and twenty years from now.

I clearly heard from the voters during the campaign and continue to hear strongly today: A key component in helping us make our vision become a successful reality is change in our local governments by consolidating the into one unified body.

I firmly believe that consolidation of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas governments is a viable tool to bring a more sound and progressive government to our community. A unified governing body with professional management will bring a higher degree of accountability and efficiency to our citizens. Government consolidation will enable us to contain and reduce the costs of our local governments. The citizens of our community have strongly expressed the desire for lower taxes. Government consolidation has spurred growth and reduced taxes in other cities.

Specifically, with consolidation:

- \*Jacksonville, Florida was able to cut taxes nine years in a row.
- \*Indianapolis' image and economy have boomed under a consolidated government.
- \*Columbus, Georgia officials attribute their success in reducing property taxes to consolidation.

This past Monday evening, the Kansas City, Kansas City Council, by a unanimous vote, endorsed this proposed legislation with two amendments:

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Attachment 1

Senator Mark Parkinson/Committee on Local Government  
Page Two

\*The elections to choose a City-County executive and seven-member legislature be non-partisan. According to the League of Kansas Municipalities, there is only one city in the entire State of Kansas which currently has a partisan election.

\*Candidates in the primary elections would run only in their respective districts, with the two top vote-getters advancing to the general election, with candidates in the general election running at-large.

How committed are the Kansas City, Kansas City Council Members and I to consolidation? Well, let me say this, I have never seen a group of people who actively worked so hard to eliminate their jobs like this group!!!

This past year a Citizen's Task Force studied and made recommendations regarding government consolidation. It was part of a grass-roots effort to spur any necessary changes to promote growth in our community.

Let me conclude by emphasizing: I promised the Citizen's Task Force that we wouldn't waste their time. It's time to get this issue on the ballot.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Carol Marinovich  
Mayor

cc: Members of the Wyandotte County Legislative Delegation  
City Council Members

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## OUR VIEW/Kansan editorials

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# Consolidation merits a vote of the people

State lawmakers should listen to the people of Wyandotte County and allow voters the opportunity to decide at the polls if they want to consolidate local governments.

While proponents and opponents alike prepare to testify during upcoming hearings in Topeka, we encourage lawmakers to listen carefully to their request — then introduce legislation to the floor for debate.

While the Wyandotte County Commission and the city councils of Edwardsville and Bonner Springs are opposed to proposed consolidation plans, Kansas City, Kan., the League of Women Voters of Kansas City, Kan., the Kansas City, Kan., Area Chamber of Commerce and the Fairfax Industrial Association do support it.

If lawmakers simply poll the organizations to find out who supports

the proposal, it would appear they would have to decide to allow voters a chance to decide the issue.

But, more importantly, if lawmakers listen to the people in Wyandotte County, they might just find that the populace is desperate to support such a measure.

State lawmakers should do what some of their local counterparts have failed to do and that is listen to the people they represent.

The status quo has failed and the people who suffer are those who make their home in Wyandotte County.

We encourage lawmakers not to be swayed by those who oppose consolidation. We urge them to give the people the opportunity to decide what form of government they want in office.

This editorial represents a consensus of The Kansan's editorial board. Other material on this page reflects opinions of staff writers, syndicated columnists, cartoonists and readers.

# Opinions

## Merger merits state support

Hearings scheduled for today and Tuesday in the Kansas Legislature on consolidation of Kansas City, Kan., and Wyandotte County are critical if this grass-roots movement is to move forward.

There are alternatives to legislative action. But this is the logical way for the community to proceed. The Legislature is obligated to consider this request on its merits, not by the political machinations that surround it.

There is no question that this proposal, which is designed to provide more efficient and less expensive government, has opposition. Much of it comes from old-line Democrats who benefit from the current outmoded system. They do not want to give up their power.

These people lack a reasonable, sound argument. So they agitate. They are still raising questions that could have been answered months ago. It is an underhanded way of upsetting cooperation.

Unfortunately such tactics can be effective in matters before the Legislature.

Things can turn negative when a community seeking legislation is divided, especially if it involves the politicians of that community, its legislative delegation or both. Lawmakers from other districts are inclined to vote against a controversial local question. They fear retaliation from disgruntled politicians when their own proposals come up for a vote.

This is not right. It can, nonetheless, be a factor. As a result, supporters need to work all the harder to overcome this politicized way of doing business.

Backers have worked hard on their plan. Not everyone is pleased with every aspect. Overall it would provide a good start toward a merger. It should, however, have both at-large and district representation. That would help to avoid provincial bickering to the detriment of a balanced approach.

Better government is the goal here. It is up to the Legislature to do its part.

*Editorials are written by members of the Editorial Board of The Star.*

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### WHERE TO WRITE

Letters  
The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Star

1-4



January 9, 1996

Local Government Committee  
Kansas State Senate  
Capital Building  
Topeka, Kansas

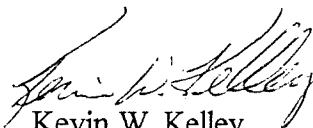
Dear Senators,

As requested in last sessions hearing on Kansas City/Wyandotte County consolidation, I am here today to report the findings of the Citizen's Task Force on Consolidation. The task force was made up of nine county residents, I served as the chairman. We met for an eight month period from January to August of 1995. During that time we conducted over 40 public meetings, forums, and meetings with numerous civic groups. We conducted extensive research on consolidations around the country and of our local governments. Additionally, we spoke with proponents and opponents of consolidation from other communities. The result of our study was a recommendation that the Kansas City Council and the Wyandotte County Commission should be replaced by a city/county legislature, professional manager, and an executive elected county-wide. Our recommendations were approved in a 7-2 vote of our members.

Copies of the draft legislation on consolidation proposed by Senator Wisdom were provided to all members of the task force. I have spoken to eight members of the task force for their reaction to the draft. All, with the exception of Julius Novak, felt that the draft reflects the spirit of the task force recommendations. This includes our members from Bonner Springs and Edwardsville.

I appreciate the opportunity to present our findings to you and will provide any other information you may need. Further, I would like to thank you for considering this matter of such great importance to our community.

Sincerely,

  
Kevin W. Kelley

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Attachment 2

1 / 11 / 96

My name is Forrest L. Rhea. I am co-coordinator of the Wyandotte County Chapter of United We Stand America. I am also a member of the Rosedale Development Assn., a large community group of citizens, which is trying to improve our community.

United We Stand America is in full support of consolidation of the Kansas City, Kansas & Wyandotte County governments.

Of more importance, my friends, neighbors, & community members, most who ~~are~~ members of the Rosedale Development Assn., support consolidation.

We see this consolidation as a chance to have a more responsible, accountable, & cheaper form of government, with better services & lower taxes.

We also feel the citizens need for input, as we consolidate, is addressed by the citizens oversight commission, a provision of this bill.

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Attachment 3

## Consolidation Bill for Wyandotte County

### Testimony before the Local Government Committee of the Senate Thursday, January 11, 1996

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I am Cheryl Sachen, President of the League of Women Voters of Kansas City, Kansas, speaking to Senate Bill No. 218 concerning the consolidation of local governments in Wyandotte County. Most of you are aware that the League studies selected governmental issues in depth establishing positions which we believe are in the public interest, and then actively supports measures to bring about the desired results.

The state League studied county government many years ago, which led to Home Rule for counties, and our local League has studied the unique situation of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas on and off for perhaps thirty years. We were able to contribute substantially to the change in city government from a three-member commission to a city council. We have supported the consolidation of city and county services where feasible, and have seen some cooperation in several areas.

Now the time has come for a giant step -- the opening of the way for consolidation of city and county governments.

I referred just now to our unique situation. As you know, Wyandotte County is a very small county -- the smallest in Kansas -- and is now completely urbanized; all but one tiny bit of land is part of one of the three incorporated cities. Property tax rates, as you probably also know, are the highest in the state. Combining most of this area under one local government would be expected to effect at least minimal savings in operational expenses.

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Bill No. 718 would not in itself result in complete consolidation. It would, however, provide a framework on which the citizens of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas could, over time, build a structure which is suitable and beneficial for our needs.

The bill provides that Wyandotte County voters must approve the plan through an election before it takes effect. Thereafter, any changes to increase efficiency and economy will be up to local citizens. Public opinion in the city and county is in favor of the concept of consolidation. The League of Women Voters respectfully requests that this committee, by reporting the bill favorably to the Kansas Senate, begin the process of extending to us and our fellow Wyandotte Countians the opportunity to shape our own local governmental destiny.

## **Position Statement**

### **Consolidation - Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County**

The following is the statement of position regarding consolidation of Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County as adopted by the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Kansas City, Kansas on August 14, 1995: (For more information, please contact Pat Yingst at 334-2615.)

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The League of Women Voters of Kansas City, Kansas, supports consolidation of the governmental structures of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas with provisions for subsequent merger of other government entities. Such consolidation would involve the integration of many separate functions of the county and the city; it would require careful study of the existing "home rule" statutes of the state of Kansas and the careful writing of new enabling legislation; community support by ballot of any plan would be essential.

Because of the complexities of the undertaking, the League supports initial steps which meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Election of a policy-making body of legislators, not to exceed the number of state representatives from Wyandotte County, to serve part-time, and to be elected without party labels for staggered terms
- ✓ A full-time presiding legislator elected at-large who would also run without a party label
- ✓ A professionally-qualified administrator, appointed by the presiding legislator with the consent of the legislators
- ✓ Clearly defined lines of delegation of authority and responsibility
- ✓ Provisions of oversight and performance evaluation of the consolidated structure
- ✓ Assurance that any reduction in the number of employees will be through attrition only
- ✓ The presiding legislator should propose agendas and have veto power with more than a majority of the legislators empowered to change the agenda and override vetoes.
- ✓ All functions of the city and county governments should be provided for in the new structure
- ✓ The structure should provide for simplifying and combining related functions

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

JANUARY 11, 1996

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am Bert Cantwell. I appear on behalf of the Kansas City Kansas Area Chamber of Commerce in support of Senator Wisdom's legislation to consolidate the governing bodies of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas.

We see the consolidation of our city and county governments as necessary if we are to have a unified approach to solving the many serious problems we face; problems that must be solved if we are to reverse the negative perception that Wyandotte County is not a good place to raise a family or to establish a business.

High crime, high taxes, an aging infrastructure, and loss of population are some of the more serious problems that must be dealt with by our community leaders. Solving those problems will require strong, unified leadership. We simply cannot afford to have city and county governments at odds with each other. Right now, we can't even get agreement on what to do with vacant lots in the inner-city.

Since 1989, the population of Kansas City, Kansas has decreased by 5.8 percent. During that same period, the cost of city government increased by 22.5 percent and the cost of county government increased by 30.1 percent. When you combine the costs of the two governments the net increase in the total costs of both governments was 24 percent. The Consumer Price Index rose only 18.8 percent during the same period.

An additional consequence of the population flight is that the loss has primarily been in high and middle income families; leaving those who are least able to pay for government services. Wyandotte County currently ranks 98th in the state in per capita income of its residents.

Obviously, this legislation is not the cure for all our problems. However, the Chamber believes that consolidating these governments is a very important step because it would increase the efficiency of local government by streamlining the

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decision-making process and provide a more unified approach to finding solutions to our problems. It would be less costly as well.

We do have some concerns about some of the provisions of the legislation. Specifically, we believe the following changes are necessary:

- Elections of members of the governing body to be non-partisan.
- Members of the City/County legislature would run by district in the primary election and at-large in the general.
- The City/County Manager to be chosen by a majority vote of the City/County governing body. That person would then appoint any other non-elected department heads.
- The City/County Efficiency and Consolidation Commission will be composed of Wyandotte County taxpayers and the commission will sunset in three years.
- Bonner Springs and Edwardsville taxpayers would not be responsible for any of Kansas City, Kansas's debt.

The Chamber's Board of Directors strongly believes these proposed changes are needed and urge the committee to make them.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our views. I will try to answer any questions you may have.