



Small, Serene, Simply Garnett.

**SB 474: ADMINISTRATIVE ORDINANCE RESTRICTIONS
TESTIMONY**

Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee:

My name is Travis Wilson. I am the City Manager for the City of Garnett, Kansas. We are a small rural community with a population of approximately 3,200 residents. I was born and raised in this community and have witnessed many changes such as businesses coming and going, residents coming and going, economic decline and growth. Every employment opportunity I have had, from my beginnings as a teen working for the local Sonic Drive-In, to my time here with the City in Municipal Government, every employer had a list of rules/regulations/policies that governed their businesses. SB 474: Administrative Ordinance Restrictions would be incredibly challenging and detrimental to the operations of both local and State operations if it were passed. Below is a snapshot of challenges we, the City of Garnett, would face:

- Potential relocation of municipal facilities if our current locations were challenged and forced to move. All our facilities are paid for so having to move would cause extra expense in building and/or renting a new location for operations. This would cause undue and unnecessary hardship on the City as our budget is already very tight and would require an increase in our transfers from utility reserves, depleting this faster than planned. This could also create hardship for residents as we would need to either increase our utility rates or taxes to pay for this relocation. These things could impact our staffing as well as if those increases were disputed and not considered, staffing would have to be decreased, which snowballs into not being able to provide all the services we currently provide.
- Zoning authority is a big one that would be affected. Currently, we have zoning restrictions and building codes in place that prohibit certain construction in certain areas. If this bill passes, those same zoning restrictions and building codes could be challenged and overturned and cause anarchy in residential areas. For example, if those restrictions go away, someone could easily put something like a strip club, or a pig farm, in the center of a residential area. Would you like a pig farm or strip club next to your property? What about a high-rise in your backyard? Slaughterhouse as your neighbor? These regulations and codes are in place to prevent those types of situations from happening.
- I mentioned staffing in the first bullet. One of the main concerns is this bill could eliminate entire departments. Street repairs are already tough, and every community fight potholes in their City Streets. Who fixes these holes if that department is eliminated? What is the Parks department is eliminated? What happens and who will then maintain parks for kids, baseball fields, swimming pools, recreation centers? To go along with eliminating



Small, Serene, Simply Garnett.

departments, what happens if the Police Department is defunded? Who would manage crime? Are people truly ok with returning to a “wild west” mentality where anything goes? There must be some sort of structure or chaos and anarchy will ensue.

- What about safety codes for structures that are built? What happens if the safety codes are challenged and overturned to determine if a building is safe? These codes are in place so those buildings are safe to inhabit. Are people ok with a building being built unsafely and allowed to house people, and then it collapses killing everyone inside because someone wasn't being held accountable and following safety guidelines?
- What about challenging and stopping public works projects? The City of Garnett is in the process of upgrading our wastewater lines. If this passes, citizens would be able to challenge this project and overturn it. Stopping and not allowing projects like these will cause already degraded infrastructure to degrade further, eventually to the point where raw sewage is leaking out and surfacing. Sewage contains many harmful microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, and protozoa which can cause many illnesses like gastroenteritis, Hepatitis A, Cryptosporidiosis, and many others. Other projects this could affect are the most recent Lead & Copper project. The State is requiring all Cities to update their water lines to remove all old lead and copper water lines. Would the State be okay with a citizen challenging this project, overturning it, and leaving those lead and copper lines in place?

These are just a handful of examples of how this will be detrimental to our city, and many others. My question is, if this is passed and applied to City Governments, are they going to apply it and enforce it at the State level as well? Is the State going to be open for the challenges to their ordinances, or will they be except from them?

Travis Wilson

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Travis Wilson".

City Manager
City of Garnett