

**Kansas House Of Representatives' Local Government Committee  
Testimony of Mary M. Thomas, Shawnee County Commissioner and Richard Eckert,  
Shawnee County Counselor In Opposition To HB 2639**

House Bill 2639 seems unworkable as written for cities and counties that have existing residential and commercial collection departments. Shawnee County has approximately 42,000 residential customers. Second place is Waste Management with approximately 11,000 customers. The bill as written would require the County to go out for bid the collection activity of those 42,000 customers. However, there are no haulers that could physically handle that volume without years of escalation. Additionally, the bill does not require that the private hauler actually handle the bid. The third leading hauler in the County has about 4,000 customers and that company gets its business by being the low cost provider. If this company bids its current rates or even lowers them by some small amount, the bill requires the County to immediately cease operations and a company that is currently serving 4,000 people must immediately serve 46,000 people overnight. This is impossible. This example further serves to remind us that the citizens of Kansas have other reasons for selecting trash haulers other than cost.

Another very important problem is geographic coverage. A hauler can bid a low price for the area they specialize in but that does not mean that bid price will be extended to the people living in the far reaches of the County or that they will even serve that address. Public haulers serve every address within the boundaries of that municipality.

Another problem of the bill is that it does not lock that hauler in for any length of time for the bid price. The hauler could pose an artificially low number to drive the public haulers out of business and then escalate the rates. Also, the bill requires lost tax revenue to be calculated as a result of not having a tax paying entity provide the same service. However under current law, both services and business personal property are tax exempt.

Another reason Shawnee County desires to keep its solid waste department is for emergency management. When the City of Rossville, Kansas was flooded in 2005, the Shawnee County Department of Solid Waste donated tens of thousands of dollars in services and manpower in cleaning up the community. When the Wakarusa River flooded the Wakarusa community in 2007, the department performed the same duties. When neighborhood improvement associations do cleanups every spring, we send them manpower and trucks for free to pick up the trash. For instance, right now two 30 yard roll-off containers are sitting at 19<sup>th</sup> and Western every Friday and we pick them up every Monday for free for the neighborhood. When illegal dumping occurs in the county, it is the department that cleans that up for the public good. Also, when zoning or nuisance violations exist, it is the county hauler that cleans up these areas. All of these activities would cease under this bill at an amazing cost to the public good.

Lastly, Shawnee County just entered into an Eight Million dollar contract with Waste Management to build a recycling facility and to begin curb side recycling. This contract would not be able to be performed under this bill. Curbside recycling is important to extend the life of the local landfill. There is no more difficult task for a county than the zoning and permitting of a new landfill. It is vital to do everything possible to extend the life of the existing landfills. This bill would actually increase the amount of trash going into the landfill and shortening its life.

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SHAWNEE COUNTY, KANSAS**

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Mary M. Thomas, Vice-Chair

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Richard V. Eckert  
Shawnee County Counselor