

KCOA

Kansas County Officials Association

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February 13, 2012

TO: Kansas Senate Local Government Committee

FROM: Joe Grisolano, Crawford County Treasurer
President, Kansas County Officials Association

SUBJECT: SB 385

Chairman Reitz and Committee members:

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am here on behalf of the Kansas County Officials Association to voice opposition of SB 385. This legislation would give County Commissions the authority to strip the duties of County Clerks, County Treasurers, and Registers of Deeds and in turn give those duties to individuals appointed solely by the County Commission. To put it in simpler language, if this bill becomes law, the County Commission would have the responsibility of all county activities, except law enforcement, as SB 385 doesn't mention the County Sheriff.

Historically, County Government in Kansas is managed not only by the elected County Commissioners, but also by other elected and appointed department heads, including the elected Clerk, Treasurer, and Register of Deeds. This allows for a separation of duties in the day to day operation of the county. Statutes were written this way to provide a system of checks and balances in the operation of county government. Each elected official works independently and many duties for each are determined by those Statutes, including the duties of County Commissioners.

K.S.A. 12-3903 already provides the opportunity for County Commissions, by resolution, to allow the electorate the right to decide whether to elect their county officials or let them be appointed by the County Commission. In November 2010, after the County Commission placed the question on the ballot, Shawnee County voters overwhelmingly chose by a margin of over 40% to keep their County Treasurer elected. It just makes sense to keep the law the way it is, instead of putting this important decision only in the hands of the County Commission.

Senate Local Government

2-14-2012

Kansas County Treasurer's Association
Kansas Register of Deeds Association

Attachment 4

The teamwork approach, with separation of duties, works well for Counties and Kansans. This way, no one individual, or department has too much power or authority in the operation of a County. SB 385 would change that entirely and give Commissioners the power to take away all the duties of the Clerks, Treasurers, and Registers of Deeds and turn those duties over to someone appointed by the commission **with no input from the voters.**

I have visited with our Commissioners about this legislation and they don't believe this would be a positive change. Have any of you during your visits back home had a local voter come up to you and tell you they think a County Commission should be allowed to strip duties from another County elected official and give those duties to someone else that the commission chooses? It is our belief that Kansas voters understand and trust their elected officials and the work each of them do. Local voters also appreciate that they have the opportunity to choose who represents them as County Clerk, County Treasurer, and Register of Deeds.

In conclusion, I respectfully ask this committee to leave the duties of all County elected officials in the hands of those who were elected to perform those duties. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony and allowing me to address you today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.