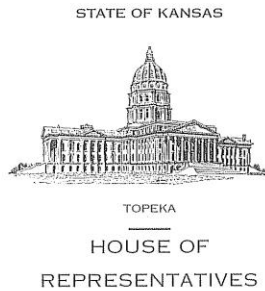


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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

REGARDING HOUSE BILL 2646

March 12, 2012

Chairman Reitz and members of the committee:
Submitting an Amendment to the Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of HB 2646.

HB 2646 seeks to improve the process by which local governments can take possession of abandoned property and transfer that property to non-profits for rehabilitation.

The bill amends K.S.A. 12-1750 changing the definition of "abandoned property" to include property upon which taxes have been delinquent for the preceding two years OR which has been unoccupied continuously for 180 days. Current statute requires both stipulations to be met, using "and" instead of "or" and only requires property to be unoccupied continuously for 90 days.

This would allow the local governing body to start the process after 180 days. The code officer would go out and code the property. The governing body would send a registered letter announcing its intent to meet and would run a periodical announcement for 30 days. Then the item would appear before the governing body for process which would take another 90 to 120 days.

We are not trying to broker housing deals, but it is not fair to the 90% of the neighborhood who in many cases have their life savings tied up in their home to see their property devalue because of abandoned properties in the neighborhood. Putting these properties in the hands of a non-profit would allow them to rebuild at cost and make it possible to have affordable housing for rural and urban communities alike. This will also bring those institutions and individuals to the table to deal with this ongoing problem. Remember that 75% of those who own this property do not live in Kansas.

I know that this is not an easy process, but one that needs to be addressed. HB 2646 accomplishes the following:

1. It returns property to the tax rolls at a better value;
2. It reverses the broken window theory. Homeowners actually improve their property;
and,
3. It makes our neighborhoods safer and healthier by keeping vagrants and drug users away.

I would encourage your support of HB 2646 as amended and will now stand for any questions you may have.