

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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When you look at Kansas population as a percentage of United States population, it is easy to see that Kansas has been in decline for decades. Comparatively, we have fewer and fewer residents to pay for necessary government services. Our tax burden has been going up while our collective ability to pay has been going down.

In short, we need more tax-payers, not more and higher taxes.

Kansas must become a low tax state with a stable regulatory environment. That taxing and regulatory stability will provide predictability for the private sector. We have reformed Worker's Compensation and will be adjusting the Unemployment Insurance rates. We are reforming KPERS and have overhauled the Medicaid system into KanCare. Income tax rates have been lowered by 14-24% while giving taxpayers a higher deduction. Tech Ed is getting more necessary attention, providing needed skills for our citizens that will help them find lasting and satisfying employment.

Each one of these pieces in conjunction with other efforts will help increase the job market and grow the economy. When these individual pieces of the puzzle are assembled, it creates a larger picture of economic prosperity for Kansas citizens. When our citizens prosper, our ability to provide government services prospers as well.

One piece of that overall puzzle still missing is property tax reform. Over the past decade and a half, property taxes have risen 99%, approximately two and a half times faster than the rate of inflation and over 9 times faster than population growth. Making the property tax process more transparent is a necessary step to provide a higher level of accountability for property taxes.

HB2047, the Property Tax Transparency Bill, addresses this issue.

In the days of 2,000 plus page bills at the federal level that no one seems to comprehend, this bill is a page and half. The bill is simple and short.

In order for local units of government to receive additional revenues above the preceding year from property taxes, elected officials have to specifically vote to increase revenues and subsequently publish that action. When property taxes increase, citizens will know that an elected official specifically voted to increase revenues from property taxes. At the next election the citizens can decide whether the increase was necessary and vote accordingly.

The inevitability of tax increases from rising assessed valuations will no longer be the presumption. Elected officials will not be able to claim that "taxes weren't raised" just because they didn't change the rate of taxation, yet knowingly increase their budgets while relying on increases in the assessed valuation of property.

Other particulars in the bill assure that all taxing jurisdictions have to abide by the same policy. Additionally, any new construction, class changes, or improvements to property will benefit local government in the year of the change and will become part of this new policy in the next taxing year.

There are things this bill does not do and does not lead to. It does not place any caps or limits on the amount of revenue that can be raised from property taxes. It does not lead to any caps, restrictions, or any kind of limitation whatsoever. Local elected officials are absolutely free to raise all the money they want from property taxes. This bill simply requires them to own the vote.

Citizens have been demanding property tax relief for years. HB 2047 is an appropriate step in increased transparency and accountability to make citizens better informed when they go to the ballot box.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven R. Brunk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "S" at the beginning.

Representative Steve Brunk
District 85