

STATE OF KANSAS

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony Regarding HB 2503

March 7, 2016

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to provide **neutral** testimony regarding **HB 2503**. I'm neutral because I support an increase in trooper pay and making certain the Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) is able to recruit new troopers to replace those who retire, but I do not support taking additional money (almost \$6 million) from Kansas vehicle owners – as the bill was when it hit the floor of the House.

Funding for the KHP comes from the state highway fund (SHF); which is commonly referred to as KDOT money. The reason – no highways, no highway patrol. My position is to find money for KHP trooper raises and recruitment and save taxpayer money. However, that is not what HB 2503 was when it hit the House floor, nor as it currently reads.

I agree we have a shortage of troopers and understand it will take some time to remedy that situation. Although pay is certainly a factor, the primary reason for the shortage stems back to the previous KHP leadership. I believe that because I've had many conversations with troopers over the past few years. I will hasten to add, I believe the current KHP leadership will right the ship and correct many of the mistakes and failures of his predecessor.

When HB 2503 hit the House floor, I was strongly opposed to increasing vehicle registration fees on Kansans by \$6 million, and thought the bill wasn't likely to pass. I still strongly oppose taking another \$6 million from taxpayers. We already have Kansas residents who register their vehicles out of state to preserve money in their family budget. Therefore, I offered an amendment in an attempt to meet the need of KHP and save taxpayers from the government taking more of their hard-earned money. My intention with the amendment was to lower the cost of vehicle registrations by \$6 million, re-name the "vehicle modernization surcharge" the "*Kansas Highway Patrol Staffing and Training Fund*" (KHPS&T) and provide the funding requested by KHP. The current language of HB 2503, is still not what I intended. My intention is to eliminate the \$4 modernization surcharge (passed in 2008 with a four-year sunset) and replace it with a \$2 charge for KHPS&T. Thereby reducing – rather than raising – vehicle registration fees in Kansas and putting \$6 million back in the pockets of Kansas families and businesses.

In order to secure the votes needed for passage of HB 2503 on the House floor and provide the funding for the KHPS&T, I ask this committee to amend the language as suggested and pass it out favorably.