



KANSAS STATE TROOPERS ASSOCIATION

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2325

Prepared for the House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

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Kansas State Troopers Association

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Chairman Hutton and members of the Committee:

Thank you for taking time to consider our remarks in opposition to House Bill 2325 on behalf of the Kansas State Troopers Association (KSTA). The KSTA membership is comprised of over Three Hundred and Seventy (370) active duty and retired members of the Kansas Highway Patrol.

In the early 1970's the Public Employer/Employee Relations Act (PEERA) in Kansas was hailed as a model law in the nation. It sets out as its first principal that "*The people of this state have a fundamental interest in the development of harmonious and cooperative relationships between government and its employees (emphasis added)*" K.S.A. 75-4321(a)(1). Since its enactment the stated purpose of PEERA being "...to obligate public agencies, public employees and their representatives to enter into discussions with affirmative willingness to resolve grievances and disputes relating to conditions of employment..." (*emphasis added*)" K.S.A. 78-4321(b) has provided a framework for both employers and employees to "meet and confer" in good faith.

This measure would make these discussions public by providing that they are subject to the Kansas Open Meetings Act and we believe this is an action would have a chilling effect on the free flow of ideas between the parties at the table. The discussions are necessarily confidential in that they often regard the inner workings of an agency and are often sprinkled with discussions regarding personnel matters one of the exceptions to the Open Meetings Act.

Our concerns also extend beyond these issues to those of public safety. In the instance of negotiations between the Kansas Highway Patrol and the Kansas State Troopers Association many law enforcement specific matters that are conditions of employment, but also critical to the safety of our members and that of the public are discussed during these meetings. Issues such as

how manpower is deployed and where as well as other practices and procedures employed to keep the public safe are frequently discussed. Not unlike the Legislatures own Joint Committee on Kansas Security which must often retire into Executive Session, the meetings contemplated here and the matters discussed are often of the same sensitive and confidential nature. Making the discussion public would serve to undermine public safety and the safety of our members serving the citizens of the state of Kansas.

Lastly I would remind the Committee that the final product resulting from any such negotiations that applies to the state or to any state agency, that the memorandum of agreement is not effective as to any matter requiring passage of legislation until the legislature has done so, nor is it effective until state finance council approval.

The process already established in PEERA, successfully employed by employer and employee organizations alike since the 1970's, remains an effective process and does not need this alteration. On behalf of the Kansas State Troopers Association I encourage you to take no further action on House Bill 2325. Thank you for taking time to review my remarks and consider the position of the KSTA.