



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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February 8, 2016

The Honorable Marvin Kleeb, Chairman
House Tax Committee
Capitol Building, Room 582-N
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: H.B. 2609 - Neutral Written Testimony

Dear Chairman Kleeb and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Riley County Commissioners is neutral on H.B. 2609.

The budgeting process in Riley County is completely transparent and public every year. One of our Board's primary concerns is always to keep Riley County's property tax mil levy as low as possible consistent with local funding needs. Those local funding needs include: providing ambulance service for the entire county and all its cities; construction and maintenance of a county jail; prescription costs and medical care for all jail inmates; construction and maintenance of a county courthouse; construction and maintenance of all county roads and bridges. All of the foregoing are unfunded mandates passed down to us by the legislature. Additionally, Riley County funds the staffing and operation of: a county attorney, county clerk, county register of deeds, health department, county appraiser, county counselor, public works department and emergency management service. The daily cost of operation for each one of those county offices is increased every year, in part, due to unfunded mandates passed down to us by the legislature. Finally, every year Riley County does its best to assist at least the following outside agencies with their requests for funding assistance: Riley County Council on Aging; Pawnee Mental Health; the Emergency Shelter; K-State Extension. Shrinking direct federal and/or state financial support to these types of agencies is expected to continue, making county support more important to them all.

One common trait among every one of these county-supported entities is that they deliver services the citizens of Riley County demand. A second common trait is that they are all supported, to the extent this Board is able to provide it, by the local property tax. It is every county's primary source of income, just as the income tax has historically been the primary source of income for the State of Kansas.

A tax lid is unacceptable to us, in principle, because it deprives our local citizens of control over their county's level of property taxation. Our Board is subject to the will of the voters every two

years. Our constituents know us. They are not shy about contacting us with their opinions about our budgeting decisions, and they will let us know the next time we see them in the grocery store. That is in contrast to the lack of direct daily interaction members of the legislators have with those same constituents.

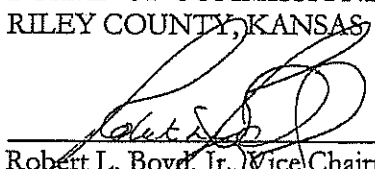
The best control over local budgeting decisions is local control. We encourage you to abandon the notion that you can do so better from Topeka than this Board does every day.

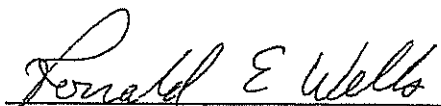
Although we oppose H.B. 2609 for all of the above reasons, if it must be a choice between H.B. 2609 and S.B. 316 in its current form, this Board would reluctantly support passage of H.B. 2609 in the form it appears before the committee today.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our County Commission's neutral position on H.B. 2609.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
RILEY COUNTY, KANSAS



Robert L. Boyd, Jr., Vice Chairman

Ronald E. Wells, Member