



Grant County Commissioners

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**Testimony of Kevin Shapland, Grant County Commissioner
Before the House Taxation Committee
In Support of House Bill No. 2609
March 9, 2016**

Chairman Kleeb and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition to SB 316 and in support of HB 2609.

Grant County stands in strong opposition to the tax lid enacted during the 2015 session. This legislation was never presented as a bill during the regular session, and never received a public hearing. The concept was added as a floor amendment to the tax bill in the final days of the session. No bill, no hearing, no debate, and finally no chance to point out the major flaws in the bill.

The tax lid on local government is unworkable, unnecessary, and is a violation of local control. We ask that you repeal this legislation and return our state to the principle that the government closest to the people is the best. Citizens will vote for the county officials that represent their values in determining the budgetary needs of the community.

If the Kansas legislature is concerned about high property taxes, it should consider what actions it has taken to increase property taxes at the local level. Grant County is a partner to the State and provides state services, such as valuing property and collecting taxes, registering motor vehicles, prosecuting state crimes, pay for courts, providing public health and mental health programs, and the list goes on. In recent years the State has shifted its responsibility and costs to counties: eliminating the mortgage registration fee, eliminating the oil/gas valuation depletion trust fund, eliminating funding for LAVTR and other revenue-sharing programs, eliminating taxation of machinery and equipment, granting tax exemptions, sending felons to county jails, assigning costs of sexual predators to counties, shifting the burden of mental health funding to our community mental health centers and jails. How can you shift all these things down to Grant County and then pass a tax lid bill?

The tax lid is unnecessary, local governments already must comply with the Truth in Taxation law which requires an extra vote and publication if taxes exceed the previous year and Consumer Price Index.

Grant County Facts:

- Grant County is funded by one primary tax source, ad valorem taxes. If Grant County cannot raise the necessary revenues to support our local services, the services will be cut.
- Commissioners recently leased the county owned hospital to Centura Health in an effort to reduce taxes on citizens of Grant County. We are very much aware taxes need to be reduced and are making every local control effort to keep them down.
- In 2015, 40% of the General Fund budget was spent on Public Safety such as Sheriff, Juvenile Justice, County Attorney and Court proceedings, so any cuts will likely impact public safety in our community.

- In 2015, 31% of the General Fund budget was spent on personnel. County government is a service driven organization, and in turn, personnel cuts will impact service levels.
- In 2015, commissioners reduced the Road and Bridge budget by a quarter million dollars in an effort to keep from increasing the tax levy. Reducing it any lower would jeopardize our high quality road system. Grant County is a rural community and relies heavily on agriculture and rural industry to survive. How long do you think feedlots, dairies and hog farms will remain in our county if the roads are unusable?
- Grant County is not required by statute to provide funding for the County Airport, Senior Citizen transportation, and local Historical Society, County Fair and Rodeo Club, but chooses to support the wishes of our community. Our citizens want decisions made at the local level not by the federal government or the state government.

Respectfully, Grant County Commissioners support local control and find it offensive you do not. We urge you to trust that voters made the right decision when they voted for their state legislators and local county officials.

Kevin Shapland, Commission Chair
Martin Long, Commissioner
Janet Stewart, Commissioner