



To: Kansas Legislators

From: Louise A. Awerkamp
Business Owner/Partner in Family Owned and Operated Businesses in Kansas
Secretary/Treasurer
The Onyx Collection, Inc. (an LLC) and Traditional Trucking Corp. (an S-Corp)
202 Anderson Ave
Belvue, KS 66407

Date: January 19, 2017

Re: House Bill 2023

America has lost many manufacturing jobs to factories overseas and in Mexico, but thankfully our manufacturing business is thriving right here in Kansas. We are located in rural Kansas, on Highway 24 right between Topeka and Manhattan in a little town called Belvue.

My father, Bob Awerkamp, started our manufacturing business literally out of a garage back in 1985, with one full-time employee and with my older brother Bobby helping during Summers and on Saturdays. In 1991 after graduating from High School, I joined the family business when we had about 30 employees. In 1999 my younger brother Francis joined us when we had about 65 employees. Now we have just about 400 Kansans working in our family businesses!

Our LLC manufacturing business is called The Onyx Collection, and it is currently one of our nation's largest custom (made-to-order) bath lavatory and shower manufacturers. We deliver our products with our own trucking firm to our customers nationwide. Because 80% of our sales take place outside of Kansas, we bring millions of out-of-state dollars to Kansas.

Despite competing with products from China, India, and Mexico, we have been able to stay competitive right here in KS. We are often recruited by overseas companies to sell-out, or move our factory, but we want to stay right here in Kansas. We have survived the housing-market crash, dot-com crashes, farming and oil downturns, and even have survived the latest increase of Federal tax rates. We have never asked for tax abatements from our county, nor taken economic development dollars, nor gotten small business loans.

Business owners here in KS have been under attack as "not paying their fair share" by many over the past few years. There have been stories about the extravagances that some business owners choose to purchase with their profits. I know many successful business owners, and have yet to meet one who lives the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Our



family does not use the LLC income tax savings to lead a luxury life-style. Any successful businessman pays a tremendous amount of Federal taxes, and we still pay State income taxes out of our paychecks.

As we grow, we hire more Kansans and pay them better. *As a team*, our employees and we contribute very much to the Kansas economy. The Governor's support and understanding (that reducing the tax burden on entrepreneurs and businesses is vital to having a healthy community and economy) has been very encouraging to us!

Grow your business, pay your employees well, and give to charity. That's been our family and business culture. Not having the additional burden of paying individual income tax on our LLC income has allowed us to invest in our own business, our employees, in our local community, and to assist charities that better the social and moral fabric of our society. As business owners, we are continually asked to support this or that project or local community project or organization, and we do much of that.

We spend a lot of money constantly developing and re-developing our products as we must keep current in a marketplace that is constantly changing with the latest trends in color and design. We spend a lot on investing in the future of our company, especially in IT, new vehicles, trucks and equipment, and building expansion.

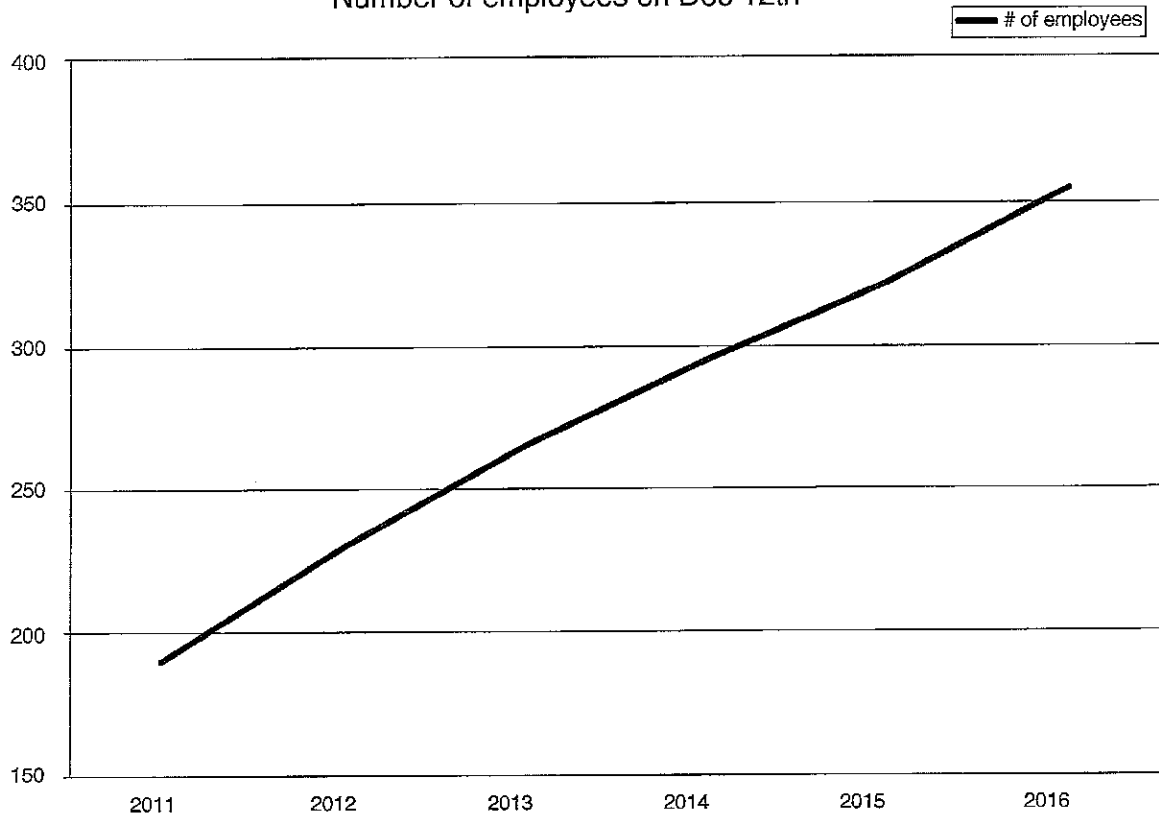
Pottawatomie County is in the top 5 growth counties in Kansas. The Onyx Collection has been a significant part of that. Our business provides a good income to blue-collar, salt-of-the-earth families who pay lots of federal, state, county, property and sales taxes. We pay our employees' health insurance premiums and they have excellent health care coverage. We pay excellent wages and have a production-based bonus program.

In the past, solid manufacturing jobs were the primary way that American families provided a good living for themselves. Our employees and our family are doing our part to keep that going and do our part in *making America great again*. We simply ask that our State government give business owners as much ability as possible to provide for their employees and their families, to help their neighbors and communities, and to invest and reinvest in the future. If the 6.45% rate comes back, it is going to hurt not just the bottom-line of our business, but negatively impact our community and local economy.

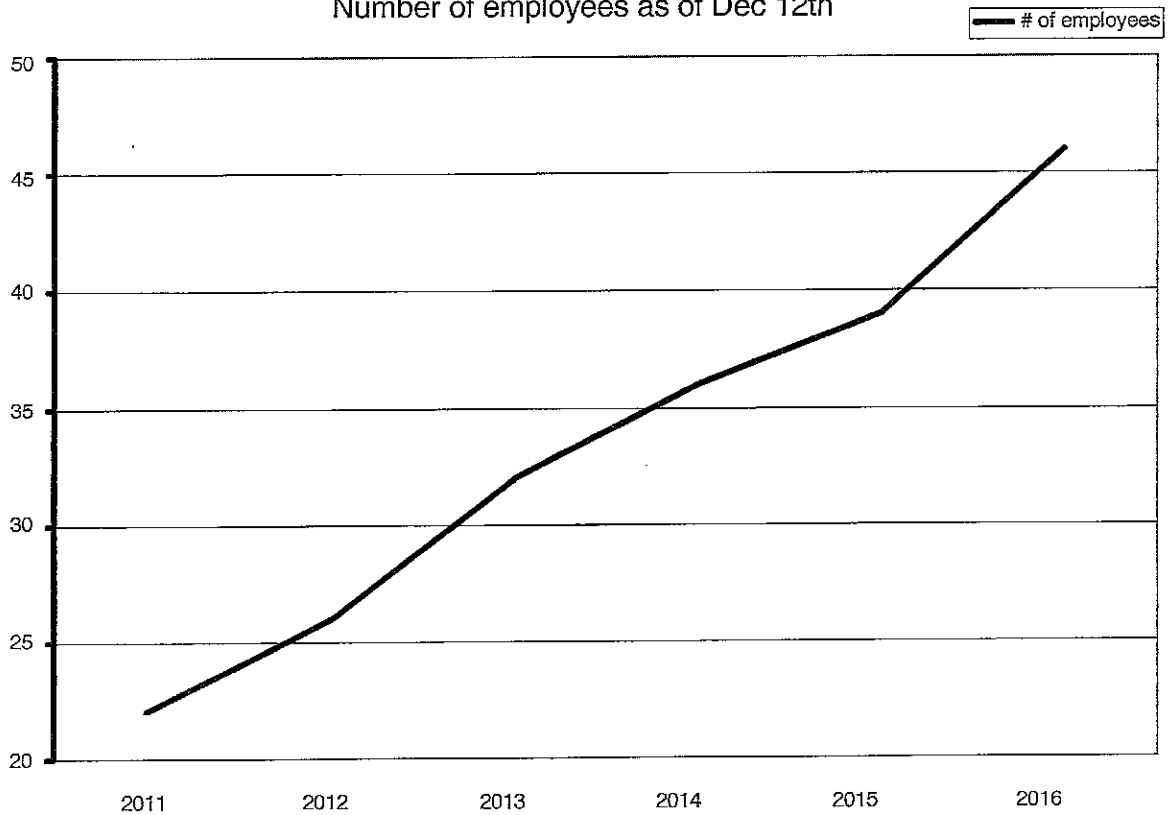
We publicly thank the Governor and his team for the respect they have shown to business owners. Even if it is not popular to say so, Kansas business owners do know better than elected officials on how to grow our local and state economy in Kansas. The American people as a whole understand that, and that is why Donald Trump is going to be our new President tomorrow.

To close the budget gap, please find another way. HB 2023 may help cash-flow in the short-run, but I believe firmly that in the long-run it will definitely hurt Kansans, because I know it will hurt businesses like ours. Thank you for your efforts to help companies like us grow and thrive and give back in Kansas. Please do not vote in support of HB 2023.

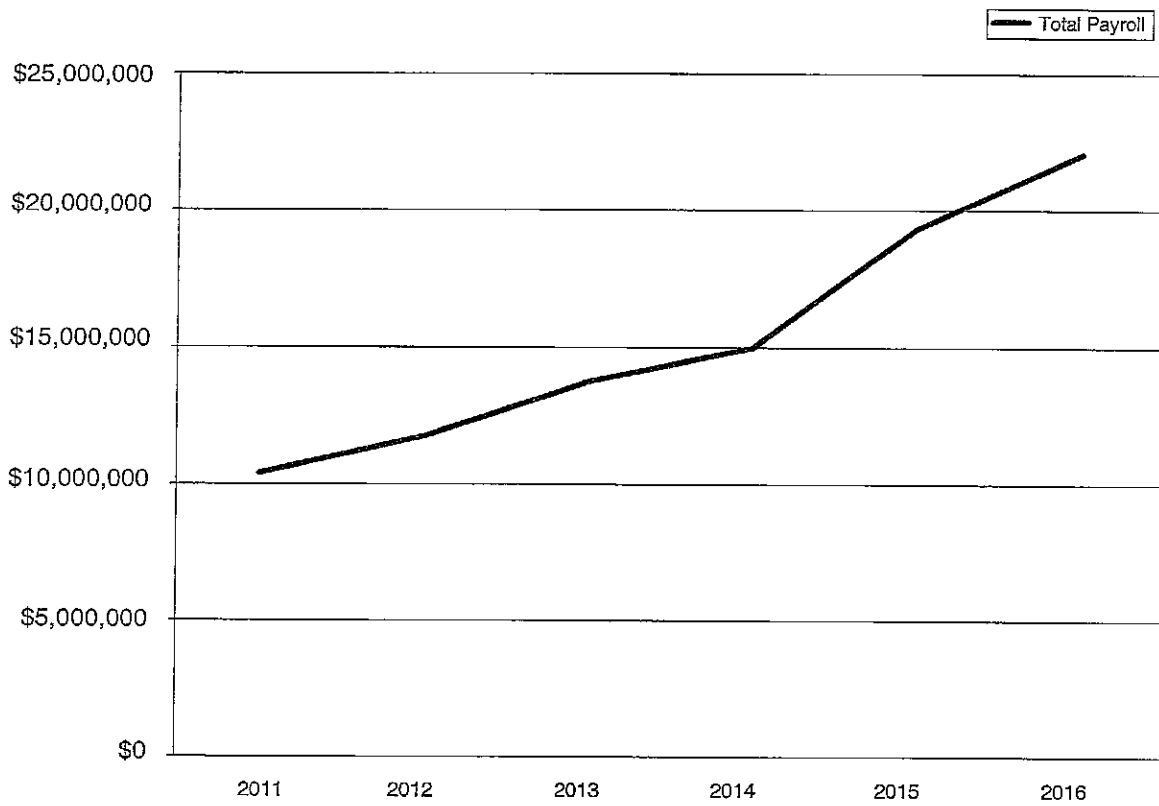
The Onyx Collection, Inc.
Number of employees on Dec 12th



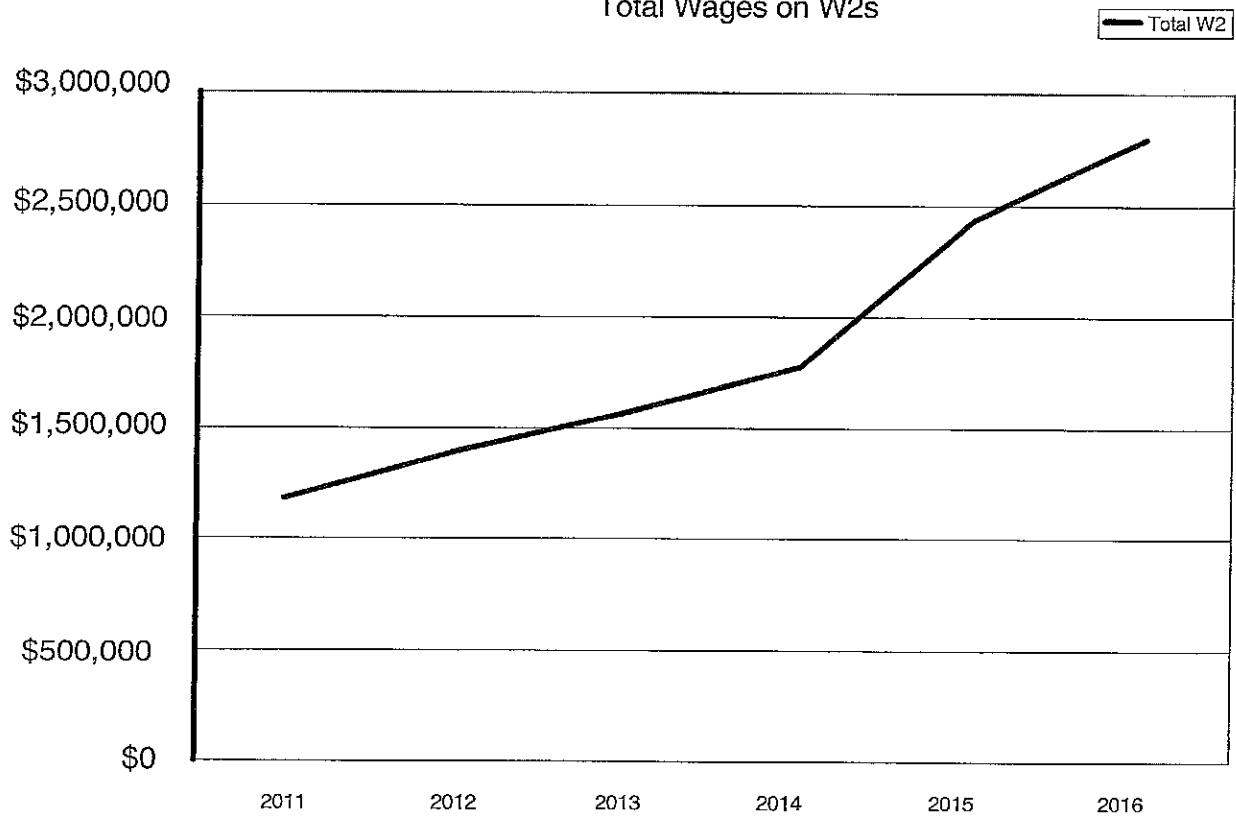
Traditional Trucking Corporation
Number of employees as of Dec 12th



The Onyx Collection, Inc
Total Wages on W2s



Traditional Trucking Corporation
Total Wages on W2s



Capital Investment and Charitable Giving
as a percentage of Gross Revenue

