



WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony of Larry Jones, Finney County Commissioner  
Before the House Taxation Committee  
In Support of House Bill No. 2376  
March 16, 2017**

Member Counties

Barber

Barton

Clark

Ellis

Finney

Ford

Gove

Grant

Gray

Hamilton

Harper

Haskell

Hodgeman

Kearny

Kiowa

Lane

Logan

Meade

Morton

Ness

Norton

Rawlins

Rice

Russell

Rush

Scott

Seward

Sheridan

Sherman

Stanton

Stevens

Thomas

Trego

Wallace

Wichita

Chairman Johnson and Members of the House Taxation Committee:

Established in 1980, Kansas Legislative Policy Group (KLPNG) is a non-partisan organization comprised of elected county commissioners representing the collective interests of 35 rural Kansas counties. Thank you for allowing KLPNG to provide written testimony in support of House Bill No. 2376, which provides for an election by protest petition when a local government adopts a budget that requires property tax revenue greater than the previous year, subject to certain exemptions.

Property taxes provide revenue to fund essential county services – law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, E-911, county health departments, hospitals, libraries, roadways, schools, salaries of county employees and other necessary services – that benefit all citizens. Most people would prefer not paying taxes whether they are federal, state or local. Although unpopular, taxes are a necessity. If the tax is fair, equitable and necessary to provide important government services, generally the assessment is palatable to the taxpayer.

Rural counties have very limited financial resources and our tax base continues to wane. Sales tax revenues in our portion of the state are down and the Legislature is looking at measures to accelerate that decline. State mandated property tax exemptions continue to take a toll on our fiscal picture. More responsibility is placed on counties to provide services and administer programs that previously were funded by state.

Our counties develop sustainable budgets to fund efficient county operations and strive to provide the best service possible with limited financial resources. This is a challenging task. During the budget process there are extensive opportunities for public participation and public input. Our commissioners regularly make budget cuts and adjustments to balance county expenditures within projected revenues, but we need flexibility. Mandating additional spending for an election is an unnecessary requirement imposed by the State.

In a small community – we are all neighbors, co-workers, go to the same church and attend school events together. Regularly we see and visit with one another. When a voter is displeased with the direction or action of their local governing body, I assure you we quickly become aware and respond to the best of our ability.

Obligating a local government to an expenditure that the public may not deem necessary is wasteful spending. Instead, we should provide a mechanism for taxpayers to request a public vote when the local government's actions fail to satisfy their constituents.

House Bill No. 2376 is a positive step in the proper direction and would allow local governments crucial management flexibility, without compelling additional spending.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to present written testimony to the Committee. I urge you to support House Bill No. 2376.

Larry Jones  
President  
Kansas Legislative Policy Group