



1300 SW Topeka Blvd
Topeka, Kansas 66612
(785) 235-0262

lochs@aftks.org

Testimony IN OPPOSITION of SCR1602
Before the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Chairman Tyson and members of the committee:

My name is Lisa Ochs, the President of the American Federation of Teachers-Kansas, and I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of SCR102.

This proposed constitutional amendment, known as TABOR or a taxpayer bill of rights, has previously been proposed in 30 states, including Kansas in 1993 by state Representative Brenda Landwehr (House Concurrent Resolution 5015). All states, but Colorado, have rejected this misguided constitutional amendment that would lock in low spending levels that have occurred since the recession in 2008 and the subsequent passage of Governor Brownback's faulty 2012 tax plan that resulted in significant cuts to all public services. TABOR has been passed in only one state in the nation, and we must learn vicariously through the perils that TABOR brought to the state of Colorado so we don't repeat their mistakes here at home.

According to ongoing research conducted by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities of the impacts of TABOR in Colorado:

- This policy in Colorado led to layoffs of teachers and law enforcement officers, and reduced services for families and seniors. It might be worse here.
- This policy will hurt the economy by making it harder to attract business to the state. Business leaders in Colorado led a charge to get rid of that state's similar laws.
- This budget gimmick does NOTHING to make government more efficient, lower taxes for ordinary people OR fix schools.
- The policy has only been used in Colorado – and voters there suspended it for five years in 2005 after disastrous impacts on schools, colleges, and health care. It even forced Colorado to close community health centers in the middle of a whopping cough epidemic.
- This policy replaces local decision making with a complicated one-size-fits all formula.
- In Colorado, the TABOR law restricts the State University Athletic programs, making it difficult to compete with other schools in their conferences.
- TABOR failed to improve Colorado's business climate or economy, contrary to the predictions of its supporters. Instead it contributed to a credit rating downgrade and alarmed business leaders by undermining the State's ability to invest in its basic infrastructure and workforce.

As the State of Kansas struggles through numerous credit rating downgrades and a structurally imbalanced budget, this is not the time to try yet another experiment on the people of Kansas particularly when we can see how the experiment ends.