



**Pete Meitzner**  
**Chairman**  
**Commissioner - First District**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS**

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**House Committee on Taxation**

**SB 294**

**March 16, 2020**

Chairman Johnson and members of the committee. I am here representing the Board of County Commissioners of Sedgwick County. In recognition of the fact that SB 294 appears to be on track for adoption this session, our County Commission can support this legislation with some important changes that will make this bill more workable for Sedgwick County. Our proposed changes include:

1. **Key date:** current law provides for 10 days between the publication of a public hearing notice in the official newspaper (August 5) and the mandatory public hearing on the budget/budget adoption (August 15), as well as 10 days between that hearing/adoption date (August 15) and when the mandated budget forms are provided to the County Clerk (August 25). The proposed bill provides 10 days between the mailed and/or electronic notice and the hearing (September 15), but only five days between the hearing (September 15) and the deadline for filing the mandated forms with the County Clerk (September 20). *We recommend that the September 20 date be amended to September 25.*
2. **Notification format:** as proposed, the bill requires a significant amount of detailed information to be provided in a written notice for each taxing entity that is proposing an increase in its tax rate, unless there is written consent from the citizen and County Clerk. For larger counties, this creates significant complexity in creating a mailer: in addition to the County government, Sedgwick County contains 70 other taxing entities that could be subject to the bill's provisions. Right now, a single countywide mailer costs approximately \$150,000.

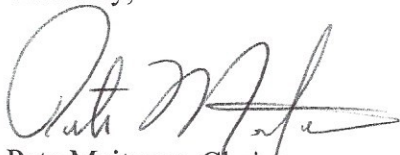
We propose allowing a postcard to be mailed to all taxpayers; the card would provide direction either to a website where the required notice information can be viewed for each property and/or contact information to call the County to request a letter to be mailed with the

same information. While on the website, taxpayers could see even more details about the proposed budget or services provided, allowing even greater transparency. We estimate that mailing a postcard would cost \$56,000 based on current first-class postage rates, resulting in the additional benefit of savings of about \$100,000 to our taxpayers. ***We recommend an alternative notice process allowing counties to notify taxpayers by postcard.***

3. Vote at conclusion of public hearing: This bill requires a vote on the tax rate at the conclusion of the public hearing on the tax rate. As you well know, budget decisions often require additional research and deliberation. To require a vote at the conclusion of the public hearing is impractical and greatly limits a local government's ability to make well-informed budget decisions, particularly if speakers present new issues or offer contradictory information or requests. ***We recommend that the requirement to hold the tax rate vote at the conclusion of the public hearing be removed, and instead that the vote to adopt the budget be allowed to serve as the vote on the tax rate.***

We respectfully request that the committee consider our recommended changes before taking further action on this bill.

Sincerely,



Pete Meitzner, Chairman  
Commissioner – 1<sup>st</sup> District