

February 4, 2020

To the Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation. The Honorable Caryn Tyson, Chairwoman.  
Written Opposition to Senate Bill 294

Dear Senator Tyson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for receiving this written testimony to SB 294. I oppose this measure for the following reasons:

This bill changes the foundation of ad valorem taxation, by using an unverifiable mill levy to calculate taxes. The County Clerk is being stripped of their authority to set the levy by giving it to the taxing district, whose duties are budget and policy. Taxpayers already have a mechanism to question and challenge taxing district budgets through a public hearing, prior to budget approval.

Using the June valuation numbers is limiting. It does not provide the taxing authority or the taxpayer the benefit of using the most current valuation information obtained in October to set the levy and calculate the tax. Addressing taxing districts that overlap county boundaries will also be complicated due to delays in obtaining information from neighboring counties that require hearings.

This bill does not provide for county growth, Consumer Price Index (CPI) or exemption for Public Safety, all held under the existing tax lid legislation. Growth is critical to all taxing districts and this bill doesn't appear to provide for that growth.

In addition, it creates a complicated process where the Division of Administration is responsible for checking taxing entities' math on the certified mill levy. Is funding and staff available to provide this certification to meet the timelines listed in the bill?

The process for the Clerk to notify all taxpayers of a potential increase is an additional burden and could also end up costing more than the refund.

The current tax lid only applies to cities and counties. This bill seems to expand this process to all taxing districts, creating new complications for more jurisdictions.

Finally, the dates proposed for hearings are moved later into the year, which complicates matters for the Clerk's. Processing results from potentially 64 taxing district hearings and then calculating the tax rolls will allow less time for the clerk to prepare the tax rolls for certification by November 1 to the Treasurer, while also dealing with fall elections. Also, regarding the dates, there may be an issue as to how municipalities handle the conflicting dates between this legislation and the tax lid, including the election dates, if the lid is not repealed.

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony opposing this bill and ask you to not move this bill out of committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John A. Bartolac". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "B".

John A. Bartolac  
Director  
Johnson County Records and Tax Administration