



Kansas Sheriffs' Association

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Testimony to the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

In Opposition to SB294

February 7, 2020

Chairman Tyson and Committee Members.

The Kansas Sheriff's Association does not support SB294. This bill in its current form removes the exemptions allowed under the current Tax Lid. The reasons for those exemptions have little to do with transparency but, address the rapidly changing economic environment of Law Enforcement. There are many factors which can drive budget overruns not considered by those unfamiliar with our operations. I will provide few examples of these unplanned expenses that routinely require budget increases.

First and foremost, to those of us with jails in our counties. Inmate population is a huge driving force. Swings in jail population seem to move with the Kansas winds at times. This creates bed space issues on a consistent basis. Housing outside of our facilities to larger can run anywhere from \$35 per day to \$125. Different unfunded mandates, felonies reduced to misdemeanors, further exacerbate an already burdened system as another issue. These are quite popular legislatively nationwide and here in Kansas but, affect our local jail populations.

Medical expenses associated with inmate care is akin to rolling dice in one of our local casinos. One year your best estimate is good enough, the next could be overruns of hundreds of thousands of dollars from a single incident or just one. The level of care provided is not discretionary. Medical expenses rise yearly yet regardless we are the catchall.

Inmate transport costs are another area. Just recently, after putting pencil to paper I had to contract out a transport from South Texas back to Haskell County. Almost simultaneously sending a Deputy to Arkansas on another. These are persons that felony warrants have been issued for and picked up anywhere in the United States. We've paid for flights in addition to these previously mentioned incidents. As Law Enforcement information sharing and technology continues to improve our costs have went up. Estimating that however again, is a game of chance. There are many jail scenarios to discuss but these are few of the more common ones Sheriff's deal with daily and struggle to budget yearly in a changing environment.

Next, we would like to inform you about many other situations commonly causing budget woes. Fleet operations are closely monitored. On a basis we all can appreciate "Things Happen". In county budgeting practices however even though insurance steps in and covers many of these incidents, the budget cannot be directly refunded. Creating a shortfall that can easily run in the tens of thousands of dollars. The yearly rise in cost of vehicle replacement is sometimes staggering. One manufacturer raised prices between \$6,000-\$8000 depending on model chosen. With cages, specialty consoles, lighting, protective bumpers, some are simply stuck to bear the cost of fleet reliability.

As an entity out from under the Tax Lid employee benefits are sought from our budget. This cost like many is ever changing. Even in a smaller place such as Haskell County, since bearing this task of estimating rising insurance rates, I have found best guess and auditors opinions to be very valuable. Like inmate medical, the cost rise yearly. In fact twice yearly a chance raise these rates is afforded. January 1st and July 1st, are those dates. Not until after those dates will you know. July 1st should look familiar from the legislation and by time constraint make estimates nearly impossible to comply with. The only guarantee generally is rates go up, how much is the question. Entities on Blue Cross Blue Shied of Kansas state plan can attest to these not inconsiderable increases.

Lastly, any tax lid bill must allow local units of government and county elected officials to fulfill their statutory duties. Any duplicative addition to an already transparent, publicized, publicly enjoined process is costly and unnecessary. We as Sheriff's want the public involved, to know our struggles, and find solutions. We do this on a daily basis in many forms. They elect us locally to make these decisions to the means our public can afford and us. As stewards and taxpayers alike we support our current process of transparency.

Troy Briggs, Sheriff
Haskell County