



Joe Warren, Director of Administrative Services

joew@cityofatchison.com

(913) 367-5506

To: Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

From: Joe Warren, Director of Administrative Services, City of Atchison

Date: February 3, 2020

Re: SB 294, Truth-in-Taxation

Honorable Chairperson Tyson and fellow Committee Members,

The City of Atchison opposes SB 294, not in theory, but as presented. Although public transparency should always be a top priority for all levels of government, SB 294 is a big government solution in search of a local problem.

As is, local governments already have a notice and hearing process for every annual budget – regardless of mill levy adjustments. Through local newspaper publication, local social media publication and website publication, the transparency that SB 294 attempts to address already exists – without the added administrative costs that this bill aims to create. Through already available reporting methods, it is quite easy for concerned property owners to understand how mill levy and property value adjustments will impact their bills. There are currently no secret formulas, no backroom tax hikes and no underhanded shell games taking place, despite what this bill implies.

Moreover, this bill, coupled with the currently existing tax lid, sends a strong message to residents of municipalities throughout the state. The message is that city residents can't be trusted to govern themselves. Under current statutes, residents have ample access to the information they need to make informed decisions and to create informed opinions that they can share with local elected officials. If local elected officials pass tax hikes that the local electorate does not agree with, there is already recourse – it's called the local election.

This is a big government solution to a small government issue. Approval of this bill would be akin to Rep. Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Chuck Schumer pushing through restrictions and unfunded mandates on states throughout the country. When bills such as the Affordable Care Act are driven through, their excuses are the same ones that state elected officials often use: "my constituents want this".

Your constituents want you to debate and effect issues that only a state governing body can. Your constituents don't want big government micromanagement. Just as they don't want the federal government addressing state issues, they don't want state government wasting time and resources on local issues. They want local issues to be handled locally where their votes and voices make the greatest impact.

One thing you might consider is that the more you micromanage local municipalities, the more you limit local governments' ability to respond to the wants and needs of local residents. The



Joe Warren, Director of Administrative Services

joew@cityofatchison.com

(913) 367-5506

more you interject state control over local issues, the more you open yourselves up to the accountability that comes with it.

When cities and counties can't provide the level of service that local residents demand, you won't be the ones who will be approached in supermarkets, libraries and local high school football games. So be ready to attach your cell phone numbers and home addresses to every state-level big government micromanagement bill – like SB 294 – so that local residents know who to call when their services aren't being provided. Be ready when potholes are left unfilled, icy streets are left untreated and parks are left un-mowed. Be ready when bridges are left structurally unsound, students are left undereducated and libraries are forced to close.

Each time you vote as a state legislator to place limits on local residents' ability to manage themselves, you take a step closer to full culpability for lack of services and the resulting resident angst. And you better believe local officials will help local residents find the rightful responsible parties.

Senate Bill 294 is unnecessary. It's bad policy, even if intentions are good. Let local residents have their own voice, rather than telling them what's good for them.