

Jackson County Commission

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Holton, Kansas 66436



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RE: Testimony of the Jackson County Commission in Support of Restoration of LAVTR Funds to Kansas Counties and Cities

Dear Committee Members: The Board of Jackson County Commissioners appreciates the opportunity to comment on this extremely important and timely issue. The Board is firmly of the belief that the issue of reinstating LAVTR funding is one of the single most important matters facing your body this year when it comes to an actual, tangible effect you can have on the citizens of Kansas you serve.

As you are certainly aware, the growing property tax burden is one of the biggest issues facing counties and cities in Kansas, and that is certainly the case in Jackson County. While state and local politicians might point at supposed hot button topics for clicks and follows, the reality of governance is that what is truly affecting those we serve is the increased cost of everyday life. The County is not exempt from that cost increase, and our budgeting process is made more and more difficult as we strain to provide basic services, under a reasonable budget, in the face of rising costs.

This problem is magnified in Jackson County, as we are in the unique situation where the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, a strong partner of Jackson County, is transferring properties into the USA Trust, effectively removing those properties from the property taxation pool. While this process is legal, and certainly its value is understood by the County, it doesn't change the fact that the need for public services increases daily, and all the while Jackson County has no recourse but to sit and watch its taxable property base shrink.

The reinstatement of the Local Ad Valorem Tax Reduction Fund, funding the Kansas Legislature is legally obligated to provide, is the most obvious, and immediate way to assist Jackson County residents, and all Kansans alike, during this growing cost/services divide. The estimated amount of LAVTR which statutorily would have been paid to Jackson County in 2023 is nearly \$530,000.00. The receipt of those funds would have meant a decrease in the County mill levy by almost four mills. This is the definition of immediate assistance to those you serve.

The County Commission has heard the rebuttals that should these funds be released, there is fear that the funds will not be used to reduce the county and city tax burden. Just as the LAVTR funds were obligated to be paid by the Legislature, those funds were specifically intended to be used for reduction of the local tax burden. The Jackson County Commission stands ready to affirm in whatever manner is necessary that it will use those funds solely for the benefit of reducing the tax burden, and not in any manner outside that scope.

Many of you as state legislators have previously served on city councils or county commissions and you have witnessed firsthand the diligence locally elected leaders must show to try and provide mandated, essential and requested services for our communities, large and small. This is not about party - this is about empathy to those we serve and recognizing a tax

relief funding method which already exists and merely needs to be reinstated to provide immediate relief to the people we all serve.

Jackson County looks forward to working with those in the legislature to fund the LAVTR and provide substantial, immediate tax relief to Kansas taxpayers.

Very Truly Yours,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
JACKSON COUNTY, KANSAS



KEITH KELLY, CHAIRMAN



DAN BRENNER, MEMBER



MARK PRUETT, MEMBER