

To: House Local Government Committee
From: Richard Malm, County Commissioner
Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners
Date: March 16, 2017
RE: Support for HCR 5007

Chairman Thompson and members of the House Local Government Committee, thank for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HCR 5007.

I have served as a Jefferson County Commissioner for since 2009, having served as a commissioner previously from 1985-1989. I also serve on the board of directors for the National Association of Counties (NACo). A result, my interest and work on behalf of local county government in Kansas is decades long, and I submit this testimony in my own individual capacity.

Local control is the bedrock of personal freedom and limited government in our constitutional democracy. It is the foundation of our representational system of government, ensuring that what can be done at the local level is done at the local level.

Kansas has a long constitutional history of home rule for municipalities, and as a result, the lives of Kansans have been improved for over a half of a century. In 1961, Kansans recognized the need for local exceptions to one-size-fits-all system of state legislative control of local affairs. In that year, the rigid, top-down system of state governmental control, most famously codified in Dillon's Rule of 1868, was relaxed to allow more democratic and representational flexibility for municipalities local charter ordinances and other forms of community control over local affairs.

By adding county home rule to state's constitutional preference for local control, counties would be free to continue to set policy, provide services, and adjust tax levies narrowly tailored the needs of their own citizens. What works in Seward County may not work in Johnson County, and what Jefferson Countians prefer may be distinct from what Sedgwick Countians want.

It is time counties share the same level of local control cities have maintained for over a half a century in Kansas.

I strongly urge the passage of HCR 5007.