

Testimony to House Committee on Taxation
In OPPOSITION to HB 2263
Submitted by Benet Magnuson, Douglas County Resident

Chair Kleeb, Vice Chair Suellentrop, and Members of the Committee:

As a resident of Douglas County, I respectfully urge you to **amend HB 2263 by deleting “jail” from the list of approved uses for the 0.5% sales tax increase** in Douglas County authorized by the bill.

As filed, HB 2263 authorizes Douglas County to impose an additional 0.5% sales tax in order to fund a \$20 million to \$30 million expansion of its jail,¹ **an expansion which is not needed and which will waste tax dollars.** Crime has been falling in Douglas County for the past decade, and it continues to fall quickly: The crime rate in Douglas County today is 29% lower than it was in 2003.² The average daily population at the jail also continues to fall: In 2008, the average daily population at the jail was 171 inmates; in 2013, the average daily population was only 138 people.³ **The jail is still well below its capacity of 186 beds.**⁴

With crime this low, if we expand our jail, **we will either have to watch a \$20 million to \$30 million building sit mostly empty, or we’re going to have to fill the facility by locking up even more people for minor crimes.** Already, incarceration for very minor crimes is increasing at an alarming rate, even though the crime rate continues to fall: Incarceration from the Lawrence Municipal Court, for example, increased 39% from 2013 to 2014 and has increased 575% since 2006.^{5,6}

Because HB 2263 as filed would authorize Douglas County to increase taxes to fund an unneeded and harmful \$20 million to \$30 million jail expansion, I hope you will amend the bill to strike out “jail” from the list of approved uses for the 0.5% sales tax increase.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,



Benet Magnuson, Douglas County resident

¹ <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2014/dec/10/county-receives-briefing-mechanism-fund-jail-expan/>

² http://www.accesskansas.org/kbi/stats/stats_crime.shtml

³ <http://www.douglascountyks.org/depts/budget/media/2015-douglas-county-budget>

⁴ http://www.dgso.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=57

⁵ http://www.lawrenceks.org/assets/agendas/cc/2007/07-10-07/07-10-07h/ls_mcfines_fees_07mmo.html

⁶ https://www.lawrenceks.org/assets/agendas/cc/2015/02-17-15/ca_recoupment_mmo.html