



March 13, 2017

To: Chairman Steven Johnson and House Taxation Committee:

Vice Chair Rep. Tom Phillips

Ranking Minority Member Rep. Tom Sawyer

Members:

Rep. John Alcala

Rep. Tom Burroughs

Rep. Susan Concannon

Rep. Ken Corbet

Rep. Erin Davis

Rep. John Eplee

Rep. Shannon Francis

Rep. Jim Gartner

Rep. Daniel Hawkins

Rep. Jim Kelly

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Rep. Richard Proehl

Rep. Abraham Rafie

Rep. Ken Rahjes

Rep. Louis Ruiz

Rep. Adam Smith

Rep. Jack Thimesch

Rep. Kristey Williams

Rep. Kathy Wolfe Moore

CC: Rep. Melissa Rooker
Rep. Jerry Stogsdill

From: Richard T. Boeshaar, Mayor, City of Mission Hills, KS

Subject: Written Testimony in Support of HB 2376

Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the proposed bill amending current law (KSA 79-2925c) that places a lid on money raised by Cities and Counties through property taxes. I am testifying on behalf of the 3,600 residents of Mission Hills in favor of allowing protest petitions in place of expensive elections as a method of allowing or prohibiting proposed property tax increases in excess of that allowed by the law.

A protest petition is a process that would not burden the taxpayers of our City with the costs of an expensive election, yet if successful would accomplish the goal of giving feedback to the City's elected officials if, indeed, the residents did not feel the benefits of the increased revenues were desirable. The elected governing body of our City feels that, through routine elections, open meetings, and City-wide surveys, it stays in touch with the desires of its residents. Through various media we communicate with

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those residents and let them know how their tax dollars are spent well in advance of approving annual budgets. Allowing protest petitions will be another effective method to get that feedback while avoiding spending precious tax dollars on expensive elections.

There are several flaws in the current law. The revenue cap created by the CPI for all urban consumers is not a realistic limit for effective municipal governments. That particular CPI does not take into account cost drivers municipal governments typically face, such as healthcare for our employees, commodity costs for infrastructure improvements, equipment such as plows, mowers, police cars, utilities, etc. – all components of costs we pay whether we provide services through our own departments or through contracts with outside companies.

The current law also erodes representative democracy as our citizens elect a governing body to make decisions about how their local tax dollars will be spent. We face frequent re-elections which gauge residents' sentiments, and our proximity as neighbors, church members, and community group volunteers allows much opportunity for interaction and feedback regarding how government is run.

Mission Hills is a fully built out City with no opportunity to take advantage of many of the exceptions written into the law. Continuing to live without either tax increases above the 5-year average of the CPI-U or expensive elections would lead this city and other cities down the path of excessive debt. Our governing body, over the past decade and a half, has successfully delivered excellent services at reasonable prices without raising our mill levy. We prefer to pay as we go, using productivity increases and added revenues from increased property valuation, building reserves to pay for costly infrastructure repairs. This good stewardship has resulted in increased valuations, and our residents have benefitted from and appreciate that. Cities should be motivated to help citizens' property values appreciate. To do so requires expenditures driving people and businesses to relocate into our cities. Not being able to share in the added values we are creating greatly limits further development advantageous to our citizens.

We ask that you approve the process of protest petitions to this law replacing the requirement to conduct elections.