



January 22, 2020

Representative Steven Johnson, Chairman
House Committee on Taxation

Kansas currently lists 332 +/- active museums. They all serve the same mission - to preserve, protect and present local, county and state history for educational and entertainment purposes.

Supporting and facilitating this mission requires expenditures for very expensive exhibit materials, preservation materials, plus the same expenses any business would incur, i.e. payroll, taxes, insurance, maintenance, etc. Add in the costs of exhibit work, archival documentation, and programming and it is no wonder museums struggle to keep their budgets out of the red.

Most of these institutions are supported by donations, grants or income they generate from events, admissions, store sales and facility rentals. Some of these institutions have additional support from a college, a city, a county or a private endowment. Finding additional sources of funding is a never ending job for the director and staff of these museums. Occasionally they must cut educational programming, lay off paid workers, and/or raise admission fees due to loss of funding.

The State of Kansas has unique Statutes (12-1681 to 12-1691) to provide a source of long-term sustainable income for Kansas Museums. Statute 12-1684 allows a city or school district to establish, by consent of qualified and registered voters of their city or school district, an annual tax not to exceed one (1) mil to "maintain and conduct a community historical museum." The State of Kansas Budget Form USD-B for 2019-2020 recognizes "Historical Museum" as budget line item (line 80.)

Statute 12-1689 creates by definition limitation to the museums who may benefit from the said mil levy – "as used in this act, (a) "school district" means any school district located in whole or in part within a city of the third class located in two counties; and (b) "City" means any city of the third class located in two counties." Our proposed change in the law would allow any school district or city to adopt a museum-supporting levy. (See Addendum A)

However, there would be limitations to eligibility – (Statute 12-1682) "a museum shall not be established or operated by both the city and the school district. In addition, it would be up to each museum to gain support from their local school district or city, file with their local county

clerk a petition signed by at least 5% of the qualified and registered voters of their school district or city and the question would have to pass a special or general election.

As with most legislative matters involving a taxation, we know there will be resistance. However, we are not asking to create a new tax as this mil levy has already been adopted. We are proposing the wording in Statute 12-1689 be changed to allow any school district or city to adopt a museum-supporting levy. Thus, the change proposed could help museums across the state of Kansas.

As a museum professional, I am asking State Representative Les Mason, State Senator Rick Wilborn and members of the House Taxation Committee, State Representatives Steve Johnson and Steve Owens to support and assist in their capacities to change the limitations set forth in Statute 12-1689.

For most communities the impact of this mil levy on their property taxes will be minimal. The impact of the mil levy on Kansas Museums will provide them better opportunity to expand their educational and entertainment services for their communities.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



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