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**Testimony to the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee  
In Support of HB2031  
January 25, 2023**

Chairman Owens and Committee Members:

Our associations strongly support HB2031. It is one of our priority bills for 2023. The bill creates the Reduce Armed Violence Act. The bill is the same as HB2657 that was passed in this Committee in 2022 except for the list of offenses listed on page 10, line 15 through page 11, line 29. The revisor re-ordered the list, but no crime was deleted or added from what was contained in the bill last year. It also includes the amendment this Committee made to the bill last year.

This bill will make the existing crime of criminal possession of a firearm by a felon (KSA 21-6304) a presumptive prison sentence, which must be served consecutively to any other sentence the offender receives, if the felon illegally possesses the firearm while committing a violent felony as defined in the bill.

These offenders are the worst of our violent offenders. They are possessing a firearm they are no longer allowed to possess while committing yet another violent crime listed in the bill. This should be a high priority for a prison sentence. Violent crime in Kansas continues well ahead of the 10-year average. Within those violent crimes there have also been significant increases in crimes committed with firearms as well.

Many times, the crime of a felon in possession of a firearm is a presumptive probation sentence and in other cases the offender is sentenced for the felon in possession of a firearm concurrently with the sentence for a new crime. This effectively means no accountability for the crime of a felon in possession of a firearm. If there is little risk of a longer sentence for the illegal possession of the firearm when committing a new crime, why not be armed?

The bill effectively will result in an additional seven to 23 months of prison time for these offenders, depending on their criminal histories. That is additional time these offenders are not released into Kansas communities posing a risk of further violence. A risk they have demonstrated they will create by committing a new crime while possessing a firearm. More importantly, we believe the threat of this additional prison time will also serve as a deterrent to convicted felons – knowing that carrying a weapon they are prohibited from possessing will no longer result in a slap on the wrist.

We ask you to recommend this bill favorably and to help us bring it to debate and a vote on the House floor.

Sheriff Jeff Easter, Sedgwick County  
Legislative Committee Chair  
Kansas Sheriffs Association