

Senate Bill 196 Support Restoring funding

Chairman Tyson and Member Senators:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the position of Montgomery County concerning the proposed removal of the LAVTR authorizing statutes. There is a need to fulfill the promise made several years ago by the organization that you represent, the State of Kansas. My name is Fred Gress, and I am the current Montgomery County Financial Officer. I have been involved in State and Local government for over 35 years. I have served as a City Clerk/Finance Director, Planning/Zoning Administrator, City Administrator and City Manager. I have experienced, first-hand, the removal of the “slider” funding mechanism, of which LAVTR was one. Over the many years of Legislative inaction to fund the slider mechanism, billions of dollars have been absent in the funding stream to assist local governments in their battle to provide the needed local infrastructure. Montgomery County like many, if not most all rural governments, relies on the unfair property tax formula to fund needed infrastructure. Our desire in Montgomery County is to maintain low and transparent budgets while also providing the needed infrastructure.

Looking back, at the potential impact of using the LAVTR funding to directly reduce property taxes, it would have provided for a range reduction from 1.3 to 1.6 mills. Important, yes, but not nearly the panacea that I would guess you are anticipating.

Reducing the overall mill levy within Montgomery County would require the full cooperation of all the taxing units that levy the property taxes that provide all desired services. This is not an easy goal to accomplish.

All taxing units set their respective mill levies following meetings and public hearings to determine what level of services are wanted by their citizens and taxpayers.

Montgomery County recommends that the Legislature re-establish the funding for the LAVTR mechanism and continue to allow locally elected officials to continue determining what local mill levies will be.