



February 12, 2012

TO: Committee on Local Government

FROM: Doug Mays, Representing the City of Olathe, Kansas

SUBJECT: Opposition to HB 2639

Solid waste collection is a state mandated service considered essential to a community's health and well being, and urban residents are required to participate. As such, the City of Olathe has collected solid waste for more than 50 years.

Olathe's regionally and nationally recognized program enjoys one of, if not the, highest customer satisfaction ratings in the nation according to its annual survey conducted by ETC Institute. The survey contrasts Olathe with over 500 cities across the country using both public and private haulers. In fact, nearly nine out of ten residents responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program while only three out of every 100 customers expressed any level of dissatisfaction in the most recent survey.

Contributing to the high satisfaction is the program's affordability. When rates are compared in Johnson County with haulers working with municipalities, Olathe remains the most affordable and comprehensive based on last year's comparisons that meet the new county recycling requirements.

Those rates are, in effect, controlled by local voters through their locally elected representatives.

Like water, public safety and infrastructure, solid waste collection is central to a community's health and well being. In Olathe's case, local voters have entrusted solid waste collection to their local government. That is their right, and that right should not be undermined by state law taking the decision out of their hands.

There are significant disadvantages to the legislation being proposed. Local voters not only lose control of an essential state required service, they become vulnerable to dramatic price escalations and diminishment of service. If for instance, a private hauler submits a "low" bid anticipating an operational loss for one year, that hauler could more than offset that loss the following years by charging higher prices. Local voters would no longer have a voice. Any competition from a local city would likely be eradicated before the next bidding opportunity since that city would not keep and maintain the equipment and employees necessary for the program.

Solid waste collection is a mandated program, and local voters have no choice but to participate. As such, local voters should have a voice in how it is administered, including cost, performance and provider.