



To: Senate Ethics, Elections & Local Government

From: City of Atchison, Kansas; Trey Cocking, City Manager; David Butler, Vice Mayor; and Michael Wilson, Police Chief

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Mr. Chairman and Senators, thank you for the opportunity to appear this morning to offer my comments regarding SB 109. We believe that this bill would have lasting negative effects on the City of Atchison, our mission, and our citizens. We are here in strong opposition to SB 109.

On the surface, this bill may appear to be an attempt to save our citizens money, and lower our cost of doing business; however, this bill will likely have an opposite effect and result in increased costs, fewer services, and higher property tax bills. The associations that the City of Atchison maintains memberships in, which lobby on behalf of the City, provide opportunities to review legislation, propose changes, and educate us on the legislative intent of new laws at the conclusion of the session. Our representatives have the ability to notify our legislatures about the unintended consequences of a proposed bill, its fiscal effects, and how it can improve or conversely, negatively impact the lives of our citizens.

The City of Atchison is a proud member of the Kansas League of Municipalities, due to a number of benefits they provide and not just their lobbying efforts. One valuable service the League provides is legal advice. The City of Atchison spends less than \$20,000 a year on our contract city attorney. Our legal demands far exceed \$20,000 a year, but as a League member we can rely on their staff for sound research and advice, saving our citizens the cost of a full time attorney. The League also provides continuing education, an exchange for best practices in municipal government, an opportunity to network, and other valuable services. The City is also a member of at least five other organizations that represent the City on various different matters before the State.

The Atchison City Commission has made some very tough calls over the last few years concerning our budget. The Commission has addressed the need to maintain core services, improve water and sewer service as mandated by the State of Kansas, repair crumbling roads and bridges, and attract and retain quality employees, all while ensuring a fair property tax rate. After going through the entire budget, line item by line item, the Commission weighed the cost of membership in these organizations with their benefits and chose to continue their funding. The City Commission is directly elected by the citizens of Atchison, works diligently with those citizens and welcomes their feedback regarding the decisions that they make.

Local government is the most transparent form of government and the services it provides have a direct impact on our citizens. Local property taxes are often met with dissent, and citizen concerns are taken to the state legislature. Rather than taking it up at the state level, the focus should be on talking to local school board members, city commissioners, and county commissioners, and encouraging citizen involvement at the local level.

The City of Atchison's 2013 Legislative Policy states: "Communication between all levels of government is critical to the successful delivery of public services to the citizens of Kansas". Representatives from cities provide facts and information that are crucial to intergovernmental relations, and as such, should have the same rights and responsibilities as all private interest lobbyists. We oppose any restriction on the use of state and local public moneys to disseminate information regarding the actions of our legislators and lobby on behalf of our cities and the citizens our commissioners are elected to represent.