

MINUTES OF THE JOINT SENATE AND HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HEARING ON THE KANSAS PAYMENT CENTER.

The meeting was called to order by Chairpersons Mike O'Neal and John Vratil at 3:40 p.m. on January 22, 2001 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Adkins (excused)

Committee staff present:

Gordon Self, Revisor
Mike Heim, Research
Jerry Donaldson, Research
Mary Blair, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Peggy Palmer
Lori, Hogan, child support obligee, Topeka
Cindy Withers, child support obligee, Erie
Rick Coyne, child support obligee, Scott City
Susan Kang, Douglas County Court Trustee
Kathleen Sloan, Johnson County Court Trustee
Karen Griffith, Norton County Court Trustee
Lee Fisher, Trego County Court Trustee
Anne McDonald, Wyandotte County Court Trustee

Others attending: see attached list

A copy of the appropriations proviso from the 2000 legislative session (attachment 1) along with a copy of Supreme Court Administrative Order Number 154 (attachment 2) was handed out to Committee. Both documents were utilized by SRS to enact the Kansas Payment Center (KPC) which is a centralized clearing house for child support payments.

Conferee Representative Palmer related testimony from a disgruntled, financially burdened constituent who reported she has had difficulty receiving her child support payments since the KPC has been processing them, has encountered rudeness on the part of KPC employees, has been refused the opportunity to talk with a KPC supervisor, and was told no payment history was available. Following an investigation of the KPC, Rep. Palmer stated the Center is grossly understaffed. She recommended the parties involved be given the option to not use the KPC if they so choose without being penalized. (no attachment)

Conferee Hogan testified that child support payments she receives for her child from the child's father are withheld from his U.S. Army pay and sent to the KPC on a timely basis. She stated that KPC then issues her a check which she receives on a sporadic basis and in varied amounts. For this, she stated, she must pay \$12.80 per month in fees. She further stated that she wondered who was collecting interest on her money. She reported that her social worker is unable to give her immediate assistance due to his reported backlog of cases. (attachment 3)

Conferee Withers expressed her dissatisfaction with the KPC from whom she is supposed to receive timely and accurate child support payments. She spoke of her humiliation regarding costly insufficient funds fees and interest charges she has incurred when trying to pay her bills on time and not receiving her payment check to cover checks paid on the bills. She offered proposals to correct KPC's problems which included better correspondence between the Center and court clerks and increasing qualified staff. (attachment 4)

Conferee Coyne presented personal testimony as a parent who is receiving sporadic and untimely checks from KPC and also as a male receiving child support payments for his child (he briefly discussed the unfair treatment he has received because of this). He expressed his concerns and offered comments regarding the KPC and SRS and what he perceives to be their failure to meet the needs of children and families. (attachment 5)

Conferee Kang presented a brief background on the function of Douglas County Trustee's Office and discussed the impact KPC has had on the office such as: having to field calls from frustrated parents and calling employers; trying to locate checks and requesting KPC to disburse them; encountering negative effects on enforcement efforts; and dealing with misleading statistical data regarding "suspense" checks. She detailed types of problems encountered and identified the most serious issue as a lack of timely response (or lack of response at all) to reported problems. She further identified other problems beginning to arise as a consequence of KPC errors. She offered possible solutions to these problems. ([attachment 6](#))

Conferee Sloan presented a brief background on the history and function of the Johnson County District Court Trustees Office. She presented a broad overview of the complex system of child support collection and discussed four serious issues involving the KPC: the amount of support payments being held in "suspense" by KPC; posting errors made by KPC; mistrust of the payment record generated by KPC; and loss of local control and trust in handling of collection and the ability to enforce court orders for support. She offered several possible solutions to these problems. ([attachment 7](#))

Conferee Griffiths presented a brief background on the structure and function of the Norton County Trustees Office. She stated that there are three systems of enforcement of support in Kansas and discussed the system her office enforces. She gave an overview of the federally mandated KPC and discussed problems her office has encountered with the KPC system. She offered proposals to make the KPC system more workable. ([attachment 8](#))

Conferee Fisher outlined problem areas his Trego County Court Trustee's Office has encountered discussing the areas of: payment turn around time; posting payments to the proper case; court trustee reports; and finding lost payments. He stated he has noticed vast improvement in these areas since the KPC began in the Fall of 2000. He called for continued cooperation between SRS, OJA and the KPC to address remaining concerns that various customers, agencies and the legislature have. ([attachment 9](#))

Conferee McDonald briefly described the duties of the Wyandotte County Trustees Office and discussed the most important/frequent problems her office has encountered since the inception of the KPC: information from KPC not easily accessible; KPC unresponsive; and KPC data base incorrect. ([attachment 10](#))

Written testimony addressing the problems encountered with the KPC was submitted by Paige Webb, Liberal, KS. ([attachment 11](#)) and Maryellen Risley, Olathe, KS. ([attachment 12](#))

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m. A continuation of this meeting will be held on January 23, 2001 at 3:30 p.m. in room 313-S.