

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2764
Presented to the House Committee on Financial Institutions and Pensions
By: Jesse Gehrt, President
Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge No. 59
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Chairman Kelly and members of the Committee,

Good morning. My name is Jesse Gehrt and I am the President of FOP Lodge #59, which represents all the Natural Resource Officers (NROs) working for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. I have been a NRO for the past 13 years. I am here to express my members' overwhelmingly strong support for HB 2764.

HB 2764 transitions, at long last, all current and future NROs into Kansas Police and Fire Retirement System (KP&F). For years, NROs have been one of only a few law enforcement officers in the state of Kansas who were not included in KP&F. My members are full-time certified law enforcement officers, and work each day as state-wide law enforcement officers very similar to Kansas State Troopers who have long been members of this public safety retirement system. My members routinely make arrests, issue citations, testify in court, conduct in depth and complicated investigations, partner with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in criminal investigations, and routinely respond to emergent and disastrous related events that threaten human lives. What's more, we are unique in law enforcement in that most of our encounters involve a subject who is likely armed.

In the past several years, we have been discussing the need to improve our pay and benefits to make our agency competitive in the law enforcement market place. Presently, the law enforcement community finds itself in an unprecedented position where the number of applicants continues to shrink while the number of vacancies increase. We are competing with other state and local agencies for applicants, and many of our competitors offer KP&F retirement while we currently do not. This transition to KP&F will bring us in line and on equal footing with our brothers and sisters in law enforcement throughout the state. This move is essential for our Agency to recruit and retain employees.

FOP Lodge #59 and its members strongly support HB 2764 and urge passage. Thank you for allowing me to testify today.