



## AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY®

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Testimony to the Kansas House Committee on Taxation

March 16, 2017

Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to HB 2376.

On behalf of more than 50,000 Americans for Prosperity activists in Kansas, I urge you to oppose proposed HB 2376, which would substantially weaken the requirement that cities and counties must receive voter approval for budgets which include additional property taxes compared to the previous year's budget.

Americans for Prosperity-Kansas is the state's leading proponent of government accountability to taxpayers at both the state and local level. We believe that local governments best serve their constituents when they are required to be transparent in their processes and exercise good stewardship of the taxpayer dollars entrusted to them.

Unfortunately, HB 2376 works against these goals by ending the requirement that cities and counties must keep their budget increases to inflation adjustments only or put the increases in their budgets to a public vote. Instead, to have a say in whether their city or county increases the amount of property taxes collected from them, Kansans will have to mount petition-signing campaigns to put the question of a property tax increase on the ballot.

In effect, this bill severely weakens a property tax collection cap that has been serving the state well in helping to control rising property taxes as a result of increasing property values. Kansas is already struggling to remain tax competitive with neighboring states when it comes to our property tax burden. Most of the surrounding states have lower per capita property tax collections than Kansas, with some states collecting less than half as much in property taxes per person as our state. Kansas collects \$1,435 per capita in property taxes – the 19<sup>th</sup> highest property tax burden in the country, and well above Colorado, Missouri, and Oklahoma, who collect \$1,365, \$960, and \$623 per capita, respectively.

Further, over 425,000 Kansans (over 14 percent of our population) are over the age of 65. As we know, many of these senior residents live on fixed incomes and simply cannot afford a large increase on their property tax bills. These Kansans, who have worked hard their entire lives and have chosen to retire right here in the Sunflower State, should be able to have a say in whether their city or county increases their property taxes – without having to jump through hoops just to have their voices heard.

Unlike other taxes, such as taxes on income and sales and use, which are fairly predictable, property taxes without a strong collections cap can be unpredictable, with the amount governments are able to collect under established property tax rates fluctuating with the market value of the properties – and leaving homeowners with big surprise tax bills when their property values increase substantially. Limitations like the ones we currently enjoy provide stability for property owners and help make certain that local government budgets don't grow uncontrolled.

For these reasons, Americans for Prosperity opposes HB 2376, and respectfully asks the members of this committee reject this bill. Instead, we hope to work with you and your colleagues in the future to strengthen government accountability and help give taxpayers a greater say over how local governments use their funding. Thank you.

Jeff Glendening  
Kansas State Director  
Americans for Prosperity

*Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit [www.AmericansForProsperity.org](http://www.AmericansForProsperity.org).*