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Kansas Contractors Association

Testimony

Regarding SB 224, an Increase in the Motor Fuels Tax Revenue Before the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

March 17, 2017

Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Senate Taxation Committee: I am Bob Totten, of the Kansas Contractors Association. I represent more than 230 companies involved in the construction of roads and bridges around the state. Our member companies have been involved in the legislative process since 1923.

Our members, who build the roads and bridges you travel on are in support of this measure which provide some funding for KDOT construction program.

As I have mentioned before to this committee, the governor's budget diverts over \$520 million a year from KDOT in FY 2018 and FY 2019 and eliminates much of the construction work slated for the future. This diversion has to stop as our roads and bridges are starting to fail. This is not what your predecessors planned when they passed the T Works program in 2010. Matter of fact, none of the 105 county commissions who passed resolutions supporting the 2010 program expected \$3.4 billion to be diverted from KDOT by 2019 when the \$8 billion program was passed.

Next year, if you implement the governor's recommendation, KDOT will be treating only 230 miles of pavement in 2018 compared to the 1,200 suggested in the T Works program passed in 2010. Doing such

little maintenance on the state's highway program will endanger the safety of our citizens. With this measure you can change how KDOT conducts its maintenance program.

Our board of directors have strongly endorsed a hike in the fuel tax because such a user fee is constitutionally protected and the money generated from such a tax has to be used on our roads and bridges. It cannot be diverted to other parts of government like we have seen with the sales tax transfers to KDOT in the recent past.

There are three reasons we have a highway program. 1) It provides a safe and reliable road program for our citizens to get from one place to another. 2) We need a good road program to get our farm products to market. And 3) Having a road program provides necessary jobs for many of our citizens to build a good program.

To give you some support on this issue, we conducted a poll in late November which I shared with you several weeks ago and the results are attached to my testimony. It shows 86 percent of those surveyed said investment in highways is a good use of our public funds.

63 percent of the people surveyed said the legislature has not adequately funded our road program and 59 percent believe the roads are in poor condition and need repair.

We also polled whether or not a hike of 15 cents a gallon was worthwhile and close to half of those surveyed supported such an increase.

We urge you to turn this ship of state around and restore the quality of life to Kansans. We need good roads, good schools and we need to take care of people who can't take care of themselves.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.