

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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JACK THIMESCH
114TH DISTRICT

Chairman Johnson and members of the committee:

I appear before you today in support of HB 2440.

Property owners across the state have seen alarming patterns begin to develop in how property is taxed. In recent years, it has become clear that there's an honesty gap in property taxes – mill rates rarely going up, but property owners are still paying higher and higher property taxes each year. When it comes down to it, the current valuation process is simply not serving the best interests of Kansas taxpayers.

There is a serious temptation for local units of government to impose stealth property tax increases simply by changing the valuation of property. While mill rates may stay the same, many taxpayers owe more in property taxes on property that hasn't increased in value from the previous year.

Barring substantial improvements, there is no reason a property's valuation should increase year after year.

HB 2440 is an effort to introduce some much-needed transparency to the property valuation process and ensure that appraisers are completely accountable to the voters. The current setup incentivizes or at least encourages appraisers to err on the side of increasing property valuations. Electing county appraisers would give them the autonomy they need to be able to represent the interests of Kansas taxpayers.

I think we can all respect the great work so many of our county appraisers do. They have a hard job and get little thanks. Making the position of County Appraiser an elected one would increase the transparency with which property is valued, would make it clear that County Appraisers report directly to the voters, and would emphasize that the Appraiser's primary duty is to the voters.

I urge your support of HB 2440.

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