

**SB 264 Proponent Testimony - in person**  
**Removing appraisers from the eligibility list**  
**Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee**  
**Dave Trabert - CEO**  
**January 22, 2020**



Chairwoman Tyson and Members of the Committee,

We appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of SB 264, which provides for the removal of someone from the county appraiser eligibility list due to termination in one or more counties.

Two news articles are attached to my testimony, underscoring the need for this legislative change.

A March 30, 2017 story from KAKE-TV says Cowley County decided not to renew the appraiser's contract and placed him on administrative leave until his contract expired in June. The story said, "dozens of residents showed up at a commission meeting last week voicing concern over what they felt was over-taxation -- some appraisals increased by 2,500 percent -- and poor handling of hearings and other activities."

The Cowley Courier Traveler interviewed the new county appraiser in January 2018. The story notes, "This is the second time Reedy has followed [him] into a job and the second time she has had to "clean up" after him."

The fired appraiser must have stayed on the eligibility list because Washington County lists him as their appraiser.

There likely are many good appraisers in Kansas, and SB 264 should not be construed as derogatory to their efforts. But Kansas should be shielded from appraisers who have been terminated over job performance, and we encourage the Committee to approve the bill.

Thank you for your consideration.



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# Cowley Co. appraiser on way out after property tax complaints

Posted: Mar 30, 2017 3:08 PM CDT  
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written by KAKE News

WINFIELD, Kan. (KAKE) - The Cowley County Commission says it's time for a new county appraiser.

County Administrator Lucas Goff said that during a special closed session March 30, commissioners approved the motion not to renew the contract of County Appraiser Lance Leis. Additionally, Leis was put on administrative leave immediately until the end of his current contract, which ends in June.

## Cowley County residents feel unfairly taxed

This, after dozens of residents showed up at a commission meeting last week voicing concern over what they felt was over-taxation -- some appraisals increased by 2,500 percent -- and poor handling of hearings and other activities.

Goff said the county is working toward placing someone into the County Appraiser position on an interim basis, and that information toward that decision would "hopefully" be available by April 7.

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EDITOR'S PICK

TOP STORY

## New county appraiser conducting 'clean up'

By JUDITH ZACCARIA CourierTraveler

Jan 27, 2018

Lori Reedy has been the Cowley County appraiser for almost six months, and she has been spending much of her time reestablishing good relations between the appraiser's department and county residents.

"I came in and assessed the situation and made my plans based on compliance requirements," Reedy said. "It's what I'm supposed to be doing."

Reedy followed Lance Leis as county appraiser. The county commission did not renew Leis' four-year contract after a year and more of public protests, including at least one standing-room-only meeting at which county residents spoke against Leis and his appraisal practices.

This is the second time Reedy has followed Leis into a job and the second time she has had to "clean up" after him, she said.

### Changes and goals

Reedy said she is making changes and introducing new efficiencies in the appraiser's office "one day at a time."

When she first took the job, 400 commercial properties in the county needed to be inspected. Every property needs to be inspected and reevaluated every six years according to state statute, Reedy said.

In 2018, one of her goals is to inspect the rest of the commercial properties — all 700 of them.

She has made some change in the way things are done: some duplicated steps have been eliminated from sales, simplifying the process of recording them.

She also has been clearing out real property files and old property record sheets. There are document retention laws, she said, but the county appraiser's office just kept "all kinds of stuff."

Another 2018 goal is to get a document imaging system so the office can have electronic rather than paper files. The office also "absolutely" needs a color printer.

Gathering the data is critical to doing the work well, she said. She said it would be a good idea to hire another field person to help collect that data.

Re-evaluating the grain elevators in the county is another goal for the year. They have not been reviewed for some time, Reedy said.

The Property Valuation Division, which is the appraiser's oversight agency, needs to say whether the office is in compliance with current regulations.

### Past problems

Asked about the problems in the appraiser's office, Reedy said the office does not set any land values. Those values are set by the state and are based on use value, not on market value.

The problems in the county arose over the past few years when the appraisers changed property from agricultural to market value. Sometimes whether land is valued as agricultural or other is open to interpretation.

Customer service is very important, Reedy said. She wants to put a coffee bar into the appraiser's office.

"It sets the tone," she said. "Makes them feel welcome."

She said she hasn't had many confrontations since she took the job, though she wouldn't have been surprised if people had come by to hear her out.

People received mailers from the appraiser's office reminding them to protest their evaluations for 2017 if they felt they had been unfairly assessed.

The appraisers held payment-under-protest hearings beginning Dec. 20. The total number of protests was 253, less than 1 percent of the 34,000 properties in the county.

Reedy said that if it is at all possible to settle an issue in the county, it is better than taking it to Topeka.

Brian Petty, one of the county residents who questioned Leis' judgment, said he went to Topeka for a hearing and received justice.

He was a member of the board that interviewed Reedy for the position, and he was favorably impressed by her, though he hasn't spoken with her since she took the job.

Reedy said she encourages anyone with questions to come down to the office.

“They are always welcome to come talk about their property. I want them to do that,” she said.

## Background

Reedy has been an appraiser since 1987. When she joined the field, she had no idea she would be in it for so long — it was just a job. But she found the work interesting, and the more she worked in the field and the more she learned, the more she wanted to remain in it.

Her specialty is commercial properties. Reedy said she is guided by two principles.

“I’m a public servant and I’ve never lost sight of it,” she said. “I’m here to do a job for the taxpayers.”

Second is valuing staff and treating them like they make a difference.

The appraiser’s office has “a great staff,” Reedy said. That includes deputy appraiser Allen Black, who served as interim appraiser after Leis left. Reedy and Black worked together in Sedgwick County for 20 years.

He knows residential appraisal as she knows commercial, so he could fill her in about what she needed to know about the Cowley County office’s operations.

“Our goal is to make sure they’re prepared to lead after I leave, to function and be successful,” Reedy said. “It is my four-year plan.”

She did not say that she will retire in four years, but she will have enough KPERS points by then.