

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET
COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lee Tafanelli at 1:30 on March 7, 2007 in Room 527-S of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Amy VanHouse, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Michael Steiner, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mike Corrigan, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Gina Bowes, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Andy Moffitt, SE Trustee for the Kansas State Firefighters Association

Others attending:

See attached list.

- Attachment 1 Overview of **HB 2486**
- Attachment 2 Testimony by Andy Moffitt, SE Trustee for the Kansas State Firefighters Association
- Attachment 3 Memorandum for CAR 101, Subject: Near Miss Incident on Fatality Wreck Scene (#2006-12345) submitted by Andy Moffitt

Hearing on HB 2486 - Fire departments, temporarily close highways

Amy VanHouse, Kansas Legislative Research Staff, explained sections of **HB 2486** (Attachment 1) which changes existing law to allow firefighters to temporarily block public highways in the discharge of their official duties. The current law allows firefighters to temporarily blockade public highways only when they are fighting a fire. Staff explained this change in law would not affect fiscal impact on the state or any units of local government.

Andy Moffitt, SE Trustee for the Kansas State Firefighters Association, presented testimony in support of **HB 2486** (Attachment 2). The first proposal is to change the language from “firemen” to “firefighters”, which is more gender appropriate. The second proposal is to allow the blockade of any public highway temporarily while in the discharge of a firefighters’ official duties which include, but are not limited to, responding to automobile accidents, hazardous material spills and highway medical emergencies. This proposal changes the language of “fighting of a fire” to “discharge of a firefighters’ official duties” to allow the blockade of any public highway.

Mr. Moffitt included examples of secondary incidents to firefighters as a result of emergency responders acting upon an incident scene that was thought to be secured to vehicle traffic (Attachment 3). In closing, Mr. Moffitt explained this bill would create a safer working environment for emergency responders working on scenes on highways throughout the state. Mr. Moffitt stood for questions.

Chair Tafanelli asked for definition of “legally close” in regard to blockade of public highways. Mr. Moffitt defined “legal close” as having the authority to shut down a public highway to traffic for safe operation of firefighters’ duties. As the law now dictates, only the Kansas Highway Patrol and the Kansas Department of Transportation can legally close public highways in an emergency response. In response to questions from Committee, Mr. Moffitt spoke to the processes of working with appropriate authorities in closing public highways in an emergency response.

The hearing on HB 2486 was closed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.