



WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

**Remarks of Randy Leis, Meade County Commissioner
Before the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
In Opposition to Senate Bill No. 373
February 12, 2024**

Member Counties

Barber

Barton

Clark

Ellis

Finney

Ford

Gove

Grant

Gray

Hamilton

Harper

Haskell

Hodgeman

Kearny

Kiowa

Lane

Logan

Meade

Ness

Norton

Rawlins

Rice

Rush

Russell

Scott

Seward

Sherman

Stanton

Stevens

Thomas

Trego

Wallace

Wichita

Senator Thompson and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Legislative Policy Group (KLPG) appreciates the opportunity to offer written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill No. 373.

For 45 years, KLPG has operated as a local government association in Kansas. Comprising elected county commissioners, this nonpartisan and nonprofit entity serves as a platform for 33 rural Kansas counties to collectively advocate for their common interests.

The only organizations that have been active for a longer period, representing local governments, are the Kansas Association of Counties and the League of Kansas Municipalities.

Senate Bill No. 373 aims to prohibit the use of public moneys for direct or indirect lobbying activities, certain membership dues, gifts and professional services.

Lobbyists play a crucial role in representing the interests of our counties by presenting data and analysis on complex issues. Lobbying is an integral part of modern participatory governance.

Local government officials lack the financial resources to frequently travel to Topeka to advocate for their positions and communicate with the state government officials. However, by becoming a member of an association, they can effectively monitor legislative activities and share crucial information and impacts, all at a significantly lower cost compared to hiring a dedicated staff member to keep track of events at the Statehouse.

During the 90-day session, the Legislature introduces hundreds of pieces of legislation, many of which have a direct impact on city and county government. Given the fast-paced nature of the legislative process, lawmakers lack the time and resources to consistently gather input from their constituents or thoroughly research emerging issues. Many lawmakers rely on lobbyist for their knowledge, long-term expertise.

Local governments must do their best in a short amount of time to follow the legislative process, propose legislative solutions and represent our positions as best and as quickly as we can. Lobbyist for local government through their vast experience assist us in understanding the public legislative process and offer valuable insight and data to facilitate and implement efficient public policies.

Associations provide far more than lobbying. KLPG also serves a year-round education function to aggregate the key interests of our community of interest. KLPG offers a unified voice on rural county government issues to be heard in a timely manner, under SB 373 our voices would be scattered.

Local governments that employ advocacy associations to represent our residents ensure transparency and accountability in our financial allocations and undertakings. We meticulously review, discuss, and vote on the expenses outlined in our budgets, and we provide regular reports to the Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission. The inclusion of all stakeholders and effective representation of cities and counties significantly enhances the quality of our laws and legislative outcomes.

I appreciate your attention and the chance to provide this written testimony to the Committee. I urge you to reject Senate Bill No. 373 as it creates an imbalanced environment that may result in more negative consequences than positive ones.

Randy Leis
President