

Senate Committee on Assessment & Taxation
Presented by Eric Stafford, VP of Government Affairs, Kansas Chamber
Neutral Testimony on SCR 1616- Property Tax Constitutional Amendment

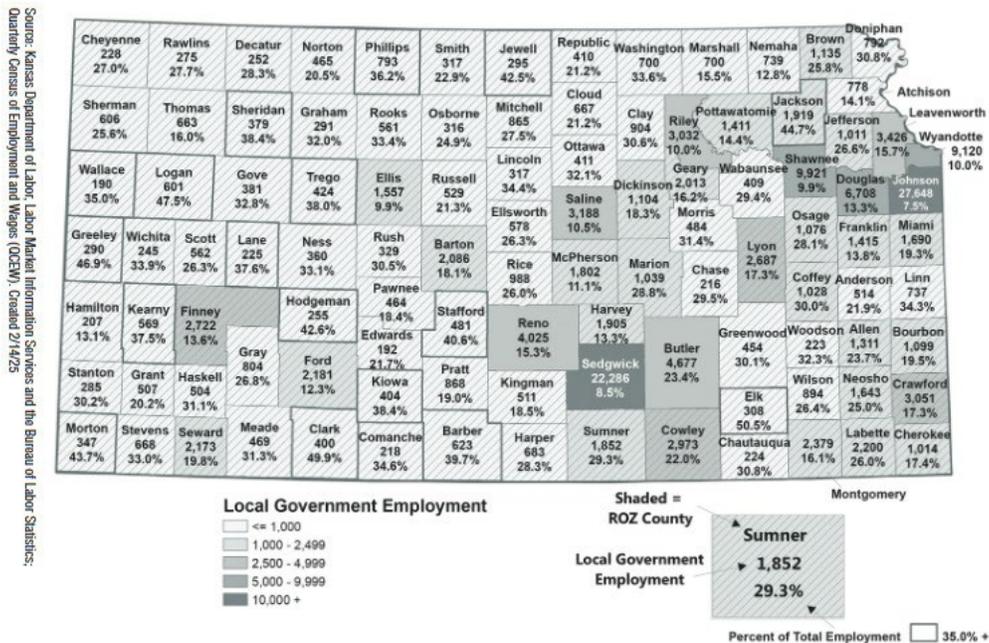
Tuesday, January 13, 2026

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large-sized businesses across the state, advocating for policies which improve the economic climate in Kansas. We appreciate the opportunity to testify as a neutral party on SCR 1616, which limits the final taxable assessed value of real property to 3%.

As we stated last year, and the sentiment among the business community hasn't changed, property taxes are one of the most opposed forms of tax among homeowners and businesses alike. Kansas has one of the highest commercial/industrial property tax burdens in the country according to the Lincoln Institute.

Local Government Employment (2023)

Source: KPI Green Book



Again, this past December, our CEO poll of Kansas business owners showed 80% felt property taxes need to be reduced- an increase of 11% from just two years ago (79% in December 2024). From 1997 to 2010, Kansas saw property taxes increase 94% in those 13 years- part of which was during the last time LAVTRF was fully funded when property taxes grew at a faster rate than when the state did not fund the program. Those numbers have only gotten worse with the exploding post-pandemic home valuations.

SCR 1616 takes a slightly different approach than previous efforts which focused on limiting assessed valuation. This approach limits the final tax to no more than 3% annually. This is an improvement in our view, as sometimes, the market calls for increases in value greater than 3%. Limiting the growth in tax revenue is a much more wholistic approach. That said, our concern still exists that we had before. We are simply concerned that commercial/industrial property owners could face a higher property tax through shifts by local government. But a 3% limit on all property taxes is a step in the right direction compared to previous versions.

We remain supportive of property tax reforms which hold local governments more accountable to taxpayers. We were supportive of both the tax lid, and the truth in taxation law, the latter passing to replace the former, and from what we are hearing from our members, the truth in taxation law is largely working as intended.

This committee has dug into the actual policy of property taxation over the past 5-10 years. Many good reforms have become law thanks to the work of the Senate Tax Committee. We should continue analyzing other reforms that are needed to improve our property tax burden and appeals process. But ultimately, property taxes are levied by local units of government and not the state with a few small exceptions.

But if the Kansas Legislature wants to get serious about property tax reform, we must begin the hard discussion of what actually is driving property taxes by local governments. Kansas is 3rd highest in the nation per capita for public sector employment per 10,000 residents. That is unsustainable. We have 105 counties, over 280 school districts, many of those with fewer than 1,000 students, and more than 4,000 taxing entities. Public sector employers are no different than private sector employers in the sense that the largest cost driver for any employer is payroll. We challenge the legislature, and various interests and organizations to begin thinking and planning to modernize the structure of government in Kansas. Until that difficult quest is pursued, property taxes will continue to be a problem in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony today on SCR 1616, and I am happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.