



**Unified Government Public Relations**  
701 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 620  
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director 913.449.4848  
mtaylor@wycokck.org

## **2016 Legislative Scorecard**

The Unified Government actively engaged in 31 bills and issues in the 2016 session. We won on 25 and lost on 6. That's a success rate of 80.6% and a defeat rate of 19.3%.

"Success" sometimes means getting our way... sometimes it means we killed a really bad bill... and other times it means we at least got compromises so we could live with a bill for the time being.

"Defeat" simply means we didn't get our way at all. Here's the list of issues:

### **What we won:**

**Tax Lid:** Local governments will have to live under a tax lid beginning January 1, 2017. The basic provision is if we raise property taxes more than the Consumer Price Index, we would have to hold an election and voters would have to approve the increase. While we fought this for two years, there was no way to stop it, so we worked hard to insert enough exemptions that we can live with it and will probably never have to use it. **SUCCESS.**

**Delinquent Tax Rates:** Last year the UG brought a measure to increase the interest rate on delinquent property taxes by 5%. The low interest rates now in place make too easy for people to skip out on their taxes. This bill passed as part of a larger bill dealing with other tax issues. But Governor Brownback vetoed it. However, the Legislature overwhelmingly overrode the veto. **SUCCESS.**

**STAR Bonds:** A bill looking to place unreasonable restrictions on the use of STAR bonds was stopped and the version that passed did not punish Wyandotte County or harm projects. **SUCCESS.**

**STAR Bonds Veto:** Early in the session lawmakers approved a proviso in a budget bill which was very punitive to Wyandotte County, in effect stopping all future STAR Bond projects. The Governor vetoed the proviso. The Senate overrode the veto. The House however sustained the veto. We managed to get 27 out of 28 House Democrats to vote with the Governor and in support of Wyandotte County. **SUCCESS.**

**Woodlands:** Two different bills were in play which could have allowed the Woodlands to reopen with slot machines and horse racing by changing the financial formulas used to determine how much profit owner Phil Ruffin could keep. Hollywood Casino opposed saying it was unfair. The UG decided to support legislation for the Woodlands if Ruffin negotiated a development agreement with the UG. He didn't. Both bills died. **SUCCESS.**

KPERS: While more attempts were made to limit benefits under KPERS, no negative bills made it through the committee hearing process to the floor for debate. Efforts to cap accrued vacations and sick leaves have some support, but not enough to get a bill passed. SUCCESS.

KDOT Funding: Even though Governor Brownback stole several hundred million from highway projects to balance the budget, KDOT will not be cutting back local government funding such as the city-county highway fund. This protects millions of dollars received by the UG every year. SUCCESS.

Mutual Aid: A bill allowing Kansas law enforcement to cross into Missouri and Missouri law enforcement to work in Kansas during critical incidents. It gives law enforcement legal protections to act in another jurisdiction. This bill is especially important in the KC metro. SUCCESS.

Body Cameras: A bill forcing all police departments and other law enforcement agencies to wear body cameras failed. It was an expensive mandate that was unneeded and would have taken away control over how departments initiate the use of body cameras. SUCCESS.

Open Records: This measure makes any video recordings made by law enforcement body cameras exempt from the Open Records law. This is viewed as critical by KCK PD and many other law enforcement agencies. SUCCESS.

Civil Forfeiture: This bill would have prohibited police from keeping money or property confiscated from drug dealers and other criminals. It would have cost the UG and KCK PD millions of dollars. We worked hard to prevent the bill from advancing. SUCCESS.

Municipal Court Fines: This stupid bill would have placed unreasonable limits on court fines and made the UG pay 70% of the traffic fines written on any State or Federal highway to the State of Kansas. It would have cost the UG an estimated \$500,000 a year. It died. SUCCESS.

Municipal Court Bail Bonds: A bill introduced by the bail industry would have forced KCK Municipal Court to allow professional bail bondsman. It was an expensive intrusion into local control that would have been negative for the court and people facing charges. While other bail bond changes were made, this provision failed. SUCCESS.

District Court Bail Bonds: Another measure to usurp local control and the authority of the Chief District Court judge. While a measure passed, it does not effect the way we administer professional bail bondsman in our District Court. SUCCESS.

Budget Sweep: This bill would have basically permanently robbed KDOT and other funds with all of the money going to the state general fund instead of designated funds. This measure would have threatened funding local governments receive. The bill did not advance. SUCCESS.

Public Building Commission: An attempt from a group of angry citizens out of Manhattan/Junction City would have required many bond issues through Public Building Commissions to be put to a public vote. We worked hard to stop this because of the negative effect on UG projects. SUCCESS.

Telecomm Towers: This bill was introduced by the telecomm industry (Sprint and other cell phone companies) to reduce the burden of getting permits to build cellphone towers. The bill was far from ideal in the way it was introduced... but with intense negotiations, local governments were able to make changes which make the bill acceptable. SUCCESS.

Fire Insurance: A small victory, but a positive one. Cities can keep a share of fire insurance proceeds on private property to make sure a building with 75% damage actually gets fixed, or torn down. That was limited to only fires or explosions, but this bill the coverage to any kind of disaster, including earthquakes. SUCCESS.

Auto Registration Notices: The State Department of Revenue again wanted to stop mailing out vehicle registration notice letters, replacing them with a simple postcard directing people to a website. The UG would have had to print and mail its own notices at a cost of up to \$50,000 a year. This “moneysaving” idea by revenue officials didn’t gain support. SUCCESS.

KTA Debts: This bill was opposed by Treasurers because of the added work with no compensation. It would require Treasurers to collect Kansas Turnpike Authority debts before allowing residents to register their cars. The KTA is changing to a system under which you can just drive through the toll booth and if you don’t have a KTAG, you will get a bill in the mail. People with \$100 in unpaid tolls will not be able to register their cars unless those tolls are paid. County Treasurers will get to keep 15% of the the delinquent tolls they collect. This change made the bill acceptable. SUCCESS.

Election Audits: A proposal by Secretary of State Kris Kobach to require local election offices perform audits on vote returns to ensure no fraud occurred. This would have put an expensive and difficult mandate on local election officials. The bill did not advance. SUCCESS.

Election Education: Another stupid idea from Kris Kobach. Local governments would have been prohibited from spending any tax dollars to in any way educate citizens about sales tax elections, bond issue elections, or property tax elections. Kobach argues local governments “cheat” and actually advocate for passage of such issues instead of just informing citizens. While we would have been prohibited, anti-tax groups could still put out as much “no” vote info as they wanted. This bill had a hearing in the Senate, but couldn’t muster enough support to pass out. SUCCESS.

Sanctuary Cities: Another Kobach bill, along with several conservatives, to punish cities which are viewed as being accepting to undocumented immigrants. We were able to work behind the scenes with several groups to block this bill from even getting a hearing. SUCCESS.

Immigration: Yet another bill that would have placed enforcement mandates and other burdens on local law enforcement and cities regarding undocumented immigrants. Again, we were able to work behind the scenes with several groups to block this bill from even getting a hearing. SUCCESS.

### **What We Lost:**

Abandoned Housing: This loss really stung. After working for several years with Rep Stan Frownfelter, City of Topeka and others to pass a law which would help cities deal more effectively with abandoned and blighted housing, the bill passed both the Senate and House. Then, Governor Brownback vetoed the bill for a number of bogus reasons which had been debunked in hearing after hearing. He really vetoed it to punish the Shawnee County/City of Topeka legislative delegation because he didn't like their position on a totally unrelated issue. Pure politics. DEFEAT.

Rental Licensing: Another major defeat as the Legislature runs roughshod over local control and home rule rights held by cities. This measure will severely damage our ability to ensure rental properties are up to code and safe to live in. It was touted as a property rights measure for tenants. BS. It was about limiting government's ability to protect people by making landlords meet basic requirements of health and safety. DEFEAT.

Guns: If "happiness is a warm gun" like the Beatles sang, Kansas should be the happiest place on earth. This mega gun bill will intrude into workplace policies and allow public employees to carry guns on the job while out in the field, even if personnel policies prohibit it. It also changes the definition of "adequate security" in public buildings to mean all security guards at the protected doors must be armed. DEFEAT.

Property Appraisals: This is a complicated bill that was a mixed bag. Some things were good, others bad. The bill passed unanimously in both the Senate and House, but the Governor vetoed the bill because of a tax dispute with a billionaire Pizza Hut franchise owner. The Legislature overrode the veto during the Sine Die session. DEFEAT.

Unclaimed Checks: This UG bill would have made it a lot easier and cheaper to deal with all those small checks written for 10-cents or \$10 that people never cash. The bill had strong bipartisan support and passed unanimously out of the House Tax Committee. But for more than a year, the House Speaker would not let on the floor for debate because he feared it would be amended with other tax issues the Brownback administration didn't want to deal with. DEFEAT.

Medicaid Expansion: Even though this issue of expanding Medicaid to cover thousands of Wyandotte County residents and 150,000 Kansans across the state has strong support, the Republicans in charge are so opposed to Obamacare, they would rather see people die than allow them to have access to insurance and medical care. DEFEAT.