



# City of Lawrence

## *2012 City of Lawrence Legislative Priority Statement*

The Lawrence City Commission desires to express its appreciation and thanks for Legislators serving Lawrence and the Douglas County Community. We have prepared a list of legislative issues impacting the City of Lawrence that are likely to be addressed during the 2012 session. Many of these concerns are on-going each year as the Legislature convenes. Municipal governments will be particularly concerned about any proposals that would place caps on the taxing authority of cities. Attempts to erode the Home Rule authority of the City of Lawrence to determine local spending and taxing priorities will be met with opposition.

### **State Support for State Services: Avoid Shifting State Responsibilities to Local Taxpayers**

The City of Lawrence recognizes that balancing revenues to expenditures, whether at a local level or State level, is always a challenge. However, the State must recognize that shifting of budgetary shortfalls to local governments does not solve the overall problem.

The City of Lawrence strongly urges the Kansas Legislature to avoid shifting the State's responsibility to adequately fund State services to local taxpayers. In 2011, due to the imminent threat of closing the Lawrence Social and Rehabilitation Services Office, the City of Lawrence and Douglas County agreed to provide temporary funding to maintain current levels of service. This was not acceptable but there was no alternative; these services are vital to the livelihood of thousands of our residents. We urge the Legislature to fully fund the necessary appropriations to ensure that Lawrence has adequate local Social and Rehabilitation Services in Lawrence.

City leaders should also be included in any discussions regarding the re-structuring of State tax systems to ensure that State financial obligations are not shifted to local governments or local taxpayers.

### **Local Taxing & Spending Decisions Should be Made by Local Officials**

The Lawrence City Commission strongly opposes the enactment of State-imposed spending or taxation controls or lids. The so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) proposals create an arbitrary and capricious procedure for what should be an essential function of representative democracy: elected officials determining the appropriate spending and taxing policies of their community. Local tax and spending decisions should be made by locally elected officials – not by artificial limits in the State statutes or Constitution. The city desires to partner with the Legislature to find solutions which will ease the hardship of property tax burdens on low-income, elderly homeowners while maintaining adequate funding sources for city services.

### **Legislative Highlights**

- Full funding for State services without shifting tax burden to local municipalities
- Protecting local tax autonomy
- Redistricting
- Unfunded Mandates
- City-State BioScience Partnerships
- Commitment to Public Servants
- Protection of water rights



***Maintaining State services, including the SRS Offices, are critical to Lawrence's residents***



City of Lawrence

***Because we serve and share the same constituents, we desire to partner with you for the betterment of our citizens and community.***

### **Redistricting**

In 2012, the Legislature will create new district boundaries for U.S. Congressional seats as a result of the 2010 Census. The City of Lawrence supports including all of Lawrence in one Congressional District if possible. Federal funding and relationships with members of Congress are vital to protecting the city's interests at the Federal level.

### **Transportation – Safety and Infrastructure Improvements**

The City of Lawrence supports the transportation plan adopted by the 2010 Legislature. State resources are a key source of funding for cities as they face aging infrastructure and dwindling resources to protect these investments. The city supports the State's T-WORKS program and urges the Legislature to look at additional funding

streams to enhance investment in the state. Completion of K-10 Highway – The SLT – in Lawrence is a key approved T-WORKS project. Support for all modes of transportation is important to the Lawrence community. Investment in infrastructure is investment in jobs and growth potential. Infrastructure investment puts Kansans to work and provides the backbone for economic development initiatives. The city opposes any transfer of the T-WORKS funds to balance the State's General Fund. The City-County Highway Fund is also essential to maintaining local roads and should be fully funded in order to support critical infrastructure needs of communities. The city supports the designation of K-10 as a Highway Safety Corridor for increased law enforcement priority and higher fines for violations. The city also supports increasing the amount of State funding which supports maintenance of State highways within city limits.



### **Alcohol and Liquor Tax Funds are Key City Resources**

The City of Lawrence and many community groups rely heavily on monies received from State taxes levied on alcohol purchases. Pursuant to State law, one-third of the fund revenues are allocated to the city's General Fund, one-third to the Special Recreation Fund and one-third goes in the city's Special Alcohol Fund. Resources in the city's general fund provide support for a number of city services, while monies deposited in the city's Recreation Fund provides resources for a number of park and recreation activities. A number of not-for-profit Lawrence organizations rely on the funds from the city's Special Alcohol Fund for their programs. The City of Lawrence opposes any efforts to divert or diminish the distribution of local alcohol tax fund dollars to the state.



## **Opposition to Unfunded Mandates and Legislation Restricting Local Authority**

The City of Lawrence opposes unfunded mandates which take limited local tax dollars to support priorities and needs of State and Federal Legislatures. A recent example is the Federal mandate on radio spectrum allocation which is costing the City of Lawrence over \$2 million dollars so that the Federal government can auction off radio spectrum traditionally allocated to police officers, firefighters and other local government uses. We also oppose legislation which restricts our local authority to make local decisions. An example of this is K.S.A. 12-16,123 which prohibits the city from requesting the names of tenants from landlords – thereby making the enforcement of city laws restricting the number of unrelated persons in single family zoned districts more difficult.

## **City-State BioScience Partnerships**

Continued investment and promotion of the BioSciences are key to the region's economic future. Recently, the city has made several significant strides toward this important community goal through local partnerships. The Kansas BioScience Authority, Douglas County, the University of Kansas, the Lawrence-Douglas County BioScience Authority and the City of Lawrence contributed resources to construct the BioScience and Technology Business Center located on the University's West Campus. This state-of-the-art laboratory facility provides easy access to Kansas University research expertise and other resources. The facility has, and will, attract BioScience and technology start-up companies that will grow our local economy. The city stands ready to work cooperatively with our local partners and the State of Kansas. Continued promotion of our strengths to attract jobs to the region and improve the State and local economies must be an on-going priority.



***The BioScience and Technology Business Center located on the University of Kansas West Campus is a partnership between various entities.***

## **KPERS Funding**

Changes to the KPERS system should be carefully considered in order to protect the city's ability to hire and retain qualified public employees. City employees are the key resource to providing high-quality services to our citizens and changes to retirement and benefit structures could impact public organizations' ability to recruit qualified professionals to public service.

## **Main Street Fairness Act**

Small businesses are the lifeblood of local communities. The City of Lawrence strongly supports Congressional action to collect mandatory sales taxes on all goods – purchased locally or through the Internet. The Kansas Legislature should urge Congressional action on this key portion of tax fairness.

## **Homeland Security**

The City of Lawrence urges an active partnership between State and local governments regarding issues of homeland security. The city's police department and our city/county fire and medical department are essential resources in providing security and safety to our community. These departments rely on funding resources that should be protected by our State Legislature.





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## Annexation

Cities must also protect their authority in regards to annexation of property. Cities must have authority to plan for population growth, economic growth and for infrastructure expansion.

## Ensuring Adequate Water Resources

Because a good water supply is essential to the welfare and growth of the Lawrence community, the Lawrence City Commission has taken steps to assure continued quality water resources. The city opposes Federal and State regulatory changes to quality standards that are not demonstrably related to public health unless adequate State and Federal financial assistance is provided to meet such new treatment requirements. We oppose water transfers that will negatively affect Lawrence's current and future water supplies.

The City of Lawrence supports continued study and implementation of appropriate plans to respond to the sedimentation issues in Kansas' reservoirs. The city also supports State funding for continued research on water quality issues, particularly in light of the quality issues in the Kansas River during 2011. Both the Kansas River and Clinton Reservoir are vital water supplies for the Lawrence community. The City of Lawrence supports increases in the municipal water fees funding the State Water Plan if such increases fund water projects beneficial to preserving the quantity and quality of our vital water resources. Municipal water fees should only increase in proportion to increases on other water plan fees for industrial and agricultural users.



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