

Senate takes 1st step toward property valuation cap

By Morgan Chilson
Kansas Reflector

mchilson@kansareflector.com

TOPEKA — The Kansas Senate passed a resolution Wednesday to cap property valuation increases at 3%, the first step toward achieving a constitutional change that would need to be approved by voters.

An amendment to the constitution must be approved by a majority of voters after passing both legislative chambers by a two-thirds majority.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 1616, which passed the Senate 30-10, stops assessed values of real property from increasing more than 3% per year except in certain situations, such as new construction or if improvements occurred on the property.

If approved by voters, the cap would go into effect Jan. 1, 2027. Values of current homes would be set at 3% above 2022 valuations.

Opponents to the resolution argued that addressing one factor — in this case, the assessed valuation — may or may not lower a homeowner's property taxes. They expressed

concern the issue may confuse taxpayers, who may vote in favor of the resolution and expect to see their property taxes decrease.

Sen. Pat Pettey, a Democrat who was a former commissioner in Kansas City, Kansas, said the resolution wouldn't lower property taxes.

"Only mill levies can do that," she said.

Mill levies are the assessment of \$1 of tax per \$1,000 of the property valuation. Local governments set mill levies based on their total valuations and the dollars needed to fund their budgets.

Local governments wishing to continue to provide their current level of services will immediately consider raising the mill levies, which determine property tax, Pettey said.

She said numerous opponents testified against the bill in committee, including the city of Mission, the city of Overland Park, the Kansas Realtors Association, the Kansas Livestock Association, the Kansas Building Industry Association and the Kansas Farm Bureau.

"So a vast, diverse group of organizations came out in opposition because they believe, and I do, that this does not reduce or limit property tax increases and could more than likely result in a shift of property tax burden across taxpayers," Pettey said.

Sen. Cindy Holscher, an Overland Park Democrat who is running for governor, said her concern with the resolution is that property taxes are the primary funding for local governments.

"Essentially, we have to take into consideration that services for local police departments, local roads, those costs aren't going to decrease or disappear," Holscher said. "The funds have to come from somewhere else."

Holscher also raised concerns that capping property valuations would, over time, cause automobile taxes to rise because local governments would need to replace funding.

"Sixty-four percent of adults typically own homes. In Kansas, 74% own vehicles," she said. "We're effectively switching and remov-

ing the tax burden from property owners to car owners, some of whom don't own property. We're squeezing the balloons, so to speak, because again, the money has to come from somewhere to pay for these services."

Proponents of the resolution said Kansas must provide property tax relief, especially for older Kansans on fixed incomes who see their property taxes jump higher every year.

"Property taxes are not just numbers on a statement," said Sen. Craig Bowser, R-Holton. "They're grocery money. They're car payments. They're retirement savings, and they're the difference between potentially staying in your home or being forced to sell."

He said Kansans have seen their property valuations "rise sharply," financially straining people on fixed incomes, young families and farmers and ranchers.

"It does not eliminate property taxes. It does not strip local governments of funding," Bowser said. "What it does is provide stability, predictability and protection against sudden



Sen. Pat Pettey, shown here in a file photo, is concerned a 3% cap on property valuations won't lower property taxes as most Kansans will expect.

(PHOTO BY GRACE HILLS/KANSAS REFLECTOR)

spikes in tax bills. This is about fairness. When market values surge 10, 15, even 20% in a single year, taxpayers are hit with increases they cannot control."

SCR 1616 will move to the House for consideration. If it passes there, it would be placed on a special election ballot on Aug. 4.

HOW PROPERTY TAXES

AND MILL LEVIES WORK

In local governments, each entity, such as police and fire departments and the county commissioners, create a budget. Officials take the total assessed value of the jurisdiction — the total assessment of all property values — and determine what the mill levy needs to be to raise the dollars to meet the budget.



Students in PSU's diesel and heavy equipment program pose with a Peterbilt 579 Electric Semi Truck donated to the university by TLG Peterbilt.

RON WOMBLE/THE MORNING SUN

EV

CONTINUED FROM 4A

Pitt State's Diesel and Heavy Equipment Program. The gift, worth more than \$450,000, will help PSU students prepare for a world that includes both traditional diesel as well as modern electronic machines.

"We're never going to completely get away from diesel; We're never going to completely go to EV," Venning said. "But this is definitely going to be part of the mix. These students who are coming out of the program

today are going to have to work with both of those technology platforms in the future."

Dr. Tim Dell, a University Professor in PSU's School of Automotive and Engineering Technology, said the truck is one of the most significant donations he has seen in his years at Pittsburg State.

"In all the years I've been here," Dell said, "I can't think of one that was more exciting for the faculty. We're thrilled about all of the different classes that we can integrate it into. It's an awesome donation in that it allows our students to

see the migration (to) electric drive. Not just in automobiles, but how it crosses over to machinery, as well as trucks."

Dell said TLG Peterbilt's gift and others like it play a crucial role for the automotive and diesel/heavy equipment classes at PSU.

"We would be textbook teachers if we did not have these donations," Dell said. "They are critical to being able to apply all the technologies that are affiliated with all the different machinery that we have out here."

Dell said the acquisi-

tion of the massive EV fits right into the vision that the university has for the space just north of the current diesel and heavy equipment labs. Pittsburg State is currently fundraising for a \$20 million heavy equipment facility project. That new building will provide lab space for students to train on heavy equipment that includes diesel engines, hydraulic systems, powertrains, electrical and electronic systems and hybrid and electric vehicles.

"This new donation fits beautifully into this new facility," Dell said.

BANQUET

CONTINUED FROM 1A

a bounce house, an obstacle course, and Boy Scouts will be bringing their air rifle range to do as well.

"... We are very excited. It's been nice. Last year, we had it out at Carbon Creek and we've had it out at Carbon Creek for the last four years so we just kind of outgrew that venue so we reached out to Camptown and they were excited to work with us and help us out and give us the room to continue to grow."

Wright noted that expects an attendance of up to 300 people on Saturday.

All proceeds go to-

wards conservation efforts across the state and throughout the nation. Their efforts locally and across the country protect migration habitats, improve water quality/quantity, and help restore native grasslands while supporting hunting traditions.

"We are a non-profit that raises money for wetland conservation," said Wright. "The money that we raise goes towards trying to preserve wetland habitat, but it also goes towards other wildlife conversation projects as well."

"... Most of these (funds) go to various projects that Ducks Unlimited has nationwide unless you specify that you want your money to go to a

specific project or you can say those funds, you want them spent in the state of Kansas or a certain area. Kansas Ducks Unlimited raises \$1 billion last year but there is almost \$8 million spent in the state of Kansas on wetlands throughout the state."

The annual event offers five sponsorship packages — diamond package (\$4,000 donation), platinum package (\$2,000 donation), gold package (\$1,250 donation), silver package (\$750 donation), and bronze package (\$350 donation). The packages include a Ducks Unlimited Sponsorship, eight banquet tickets with preferred seating, along with one Kansas Ducks Unlimited sponsor license plate.

Each package includes various guns with brands such as Beretta, Kimber, Smith & Wesson, Marlin, Canik, Savage Arms, and Escort, ranging from rifles to pistols. While the packages include the similar items such as tickets and sponsorships, the higher end guns are included in the more expensive packages, not available in the bronze package.

For more information, call Wright at 620-238-2330 or visit KSDU.org.

This reporting is made possible, in part, by the Support Local Journalism Project Fund. Learn more at: southeastkansas.org/Localnews.

150

CONTINUED FROM 1A

tee is working to bring back some old favorites from past celebrations, including Night at the Friendly Tavern and the Amazing Race scavenger hunt, sponsored by the Pittsburg Area Young Professionals, as well as events for 6-2-0 Day in June.

The artist relations committee reported that grants for murals are now open with submissions due by March 23. They are in the process of meeting with the ownership of Wheeler Michelson Law about hosting a mural.

The history and local culture committee is planning a photo scanning night at the Axe Library on campus. The date has yet to be finalized, but the public is encouraged to come and add their family photos to the Axe's Special Collections. On March 21, Miners Hall Museum will host "A Night in Philadelphia" at Memorial Auditorium and the Crawford County Historical Museum will host its annual "Cowboy Days" on May 2.

The volunteer coordination committee is looking to clear requests from FindAGrave.com to photograph more than 100 graves in Pittsburg cemeteries with the help of PHS students. Another possible grave-related activity involves finding the oldest grave in the city, cleaning the stone, and producing a short biography of that person.

COLLINS

CONTINUED FROM 3A

received much feedback from both sides of that debate but most of what I have heard from our district has been in opposition to HB 2368.

I keep hearing from constituents about property tax relief and there are a number of proposals out there to address that topic.

For youth engagement, Lakeside Elementary will turn 100 years old in 2026. A birthday celebration is being planned for October 4, from 2 to 4 p.m. Pittsburg High School's Lauch program has been working on a Pitt 150 coloring book and made a first draft of the book available to the executive committee to review and critique.

Other bright ideas include collecting and publishing a Pittsburg Cookbook filled with family recipes; a city-sponsored Fourth of July parade starting at 8 a.m. and travelling up Broadway, beginning at 1st Street and ending at 7th Street — the idea being to "push" crowds toward the Farmers Market and Lincoln Park.

The committee is adamant that Little Balkans Days will happen in some form or another over Labor Day weekend in September. To that end, many of the traditional events are already sponsored by local businesses, so the city hopes they will continue to do so.

The city, for its part, will coordinate a street dance on Friday night and golf and pickle ball tournaments on Saturday. Pitt 150 hopes Pittsburg Public Library will write and perform a puppet show about the Little Balkans during what would normally be Little Balkans Days.

This reporting is made possible, in part, by the Support Local Journalism Project Fund. Learn more at: southeastkansas.org/Localnews

When any of them come to the House floor in the form of a bill I will take them into consideration and decide on their merits.

That's it for now but as I always say, feel free to reach out with concerns and if you are ever in Topeka during the session, I would love to have you drop by the Capitol. Ad Astra Per Aspera.