



Kansas Sheriffs' Association

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Testimony to the Joint Committee On Pensions, Investments And Benefits KP&F Option for Local Corrections Officers

November 4, 2019

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chairman Longbine, and Committee Members,

The Kansas Sheriffs Association is requesting a change to the KP&F statutes to allow a county option to move their local corrections officers who are not state certified law enforcement officers from the KPERS retirement plan to KP&F.

We were asked to answer the following questions regarding this proposal:

1. Why and under what circumstances should their sub-group of employees be allowed to associate with a different retirement plan?

Across the State of Kansas many sheriff offices are finding it difficult to hire detention deputies/corrections officers/jailers. In part, this is due to lower wages than fully commissioned deputies and being required to enroll in KPERS while deputies are in KP&F.

The move to KP&F should be allowed under the following circumstances:

- Approval of the move by the Board of County Commissioners.
 - The county's sheriff's deputies must be under KP&F for a county to consider placing the local corrections officers under KP&F.
 - There would be no mandate for a county to move their corrections officers to KP&F from local KPERS. Each county would have the option to move their corrections officers who are not sworn law enforcement officers to the KP&F system. Each county can consider the costs and advantages in making this decision.
 - The move from KPERS to KP&F would not convert past KPERS benefits to KP&F benefits. What is earned under local KPERS prior to the switch would be handled separately from the KP&F benefits earned going forward from the switch at the time of retirement.
 - Vestment should not be affected by the switch. In other words, an employee near retirement when the county makes the switch will be vested in KP&F based on total KPERS and KP&F years of service, not just the KP&F time.
2. How are the sub-groups' skills, job requirements and working conditions different from those employees remaining in the current plan?

Corrections officers eligible for this change are only those employees who work directly in the inmate area of the jail and are responsible for the direct oversight, control, and monitoring of prisoners. It does not include medical staff, kitchen staff, or clerical staff of the jail.

3. To what extent are your sub-group similar to the employees in KP&F?

Local corrections officers and law enforcement officers are dealing with the same criminals and those accused of crimes. Both operate in dangerous environments under high stress conditions requiring constant vigilance and special skills to work with those accused or convicted of crimes.

4. Why would the added expense to employers (and taxpayers) be worth it?

We know several counties are interested in moving their corrections officers to KP&F, even with the additional costs, to help retain and hire high quality staff and to bring equity to the position. If we can retain current employees and recruit qualified employees who will stay longer, the costs of more frequent replacement of employees can be avoided. In jails where there are significant vacancies, it is less expensive to fill the vacancies than to pay overtime to assure adequate staff for the safety of the inmates and employees. Filling vacancies also helps retention by avoiding burnout from working too many overtime hours.

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In 2019, the Kansas Sheriffs Association requested HB2139 proposing to allow local counties the option of placing detention deputies/correction officers/jailers into the KP&F retirement system. HB2139 contains provisions we believe are consistent with the above

We ask you to consider approval of the bill with this proposal.

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