



**Testimony on Affiliating Certain KDWPT Employees With KPF
To
The Joint Committee on Pensions, Investments, and Benefits
By Brad Loveless
Secretary
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism**

Nov 4, 2019

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

The Natural Resource Officers (NROs), Park Rangers, Assistant Managers and Managers (PRMs), and Public Lands Assistant Managers and Managers (PLMs) are full-time certified law enforcement officers (LEOs) possessing the same authority and arrest powers as their law enforcement counterparts employed by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI), the Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) and police officers employed by municipal police departments throughout the state, most of whom are members of the KP&F retirement system. Our officers are the only state-wide law enforcement officers who are not included in KP&F. The Agency believes that including them in this specialized retirement system will allow the Agency to more effectively recruit and retain quality certified law enforcement staff as the law enforcement market grows ever more competitive.

2. How are the sub-groups' skills, job requirements and working conditions different from those employees remaining in the current plan?

Our certified LEOs are much different than other employees by virtue of their public safety functions. The Agency believes those specialized job requirements, most notably the fact that they are often placed in harm's way as a result of their job duties, distinguish them from other state employees. The legislature long ago recognized this distinction by creating this specialized retirement system for public safety. These statewide, fully certified LEOs should be included in a retirement system where, we believe, they always should have been.

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

The agency's LEOs are the same as all the other LEOs currently in KP&F and particularly are the only statewide LEOs not in the retirement system.

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

As the Committee is aware, KPF has slightly different retirement benefits that encourage transition out of law enforcement at an earlier age, which also protects the individual officer from being involved in physical confrontations at a later age, and we feel it is appropriate to add our officers into this system. In addition,

recruitment and retention of valuable highly trained law enforcement officers is equally important. We cannot continue to be a training ground for other states.

The KDWPT is entirely fee funded and this transition would have no negative impact on State General Funds. The estimated expenditure for the agency in FY 2020 and FY 2021 for salaries is \$719,351. By fee fund, the expenditures would be: Wildlife Fee Fund \$460,111; Boating Fee Fund \$43,435; and Park Fee Fund \$215,805.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to testify and requests favorable consideration for the transition of our employees to the KP&F retirement system.