

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2009

Honorable Chairman Proehl and House Transportation Committee Members.

As a compassionate conservative, I strongly support allowing people who have an unpaid traffic fine to drive on a restricted license rather than have their license suspended.

Denying anyone living in Kansas the ability to get to work, go to a doctor, get groceries or take their children to school is "cruel and unusual punishment". Most Kansas towns and cities do not have public transportation. So, giving the power for Municipal Courts to suspend a person's driver's license just to collect a debt has the effect of sentencing that person to "house arrest".

Most of the unpaid tickets are for minor traffic infractions by low income drivers who have limited financial means to pay their fine plus court costs. If they do not have the money to pay their ticket within the short period of time allowed by the Court, a bench warrant is often issued and their license is suspended.

However, the person owing the fine does not know that a warrant for their arrest has been issued nor do they know that their license has been suspended. So, if they are pulled over again, they are arrested, their car impounded and they are taken to jail. Now, instead of a relatively small fine, they have the added costs of bonding out of jail, paying to get their car out of impound, and having additional costs added to the original fine.

In many cases, being in jail and having a car impounded not only causes the person jailed to lose their job, but it also means that other people in the family who depended on that person to drive them to work, get groceries or go to the doctor are also without transportation. So, in an effort to force poor people to pay expensive fines in a limited amount of time, the unintended consequences on them and their families are massive.

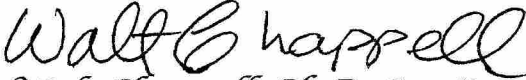
Passing HB2009 will treat people with dignity and recognizes the fact that thousands of drivers given traffic tickets do not have extra money to pay large fines in a short time. Also, by allowing restricted driving privileges, taxpayers do not end up paying the added costs of housing people in jail or providing food stamps and welfare when these drivers lose their jobs because they have no way to legally drive to work.

*****But, before you pass this bill out of committee, I recommend that you remove the expiration date of January 1, 2016. Restricted licenses worked well before but had a 2012 sunset date. There is no justification for having to repeatedly renew this statute.

I also recommend that you remove the \$59 reinstatement fee "for each charge on which a person failed" to pay in Section 2 (C) on page 3. If a person has multiple fines unpaid, this added cost for each ticket is a huge burden which is often impossible to pay.

In a state like Kansas, we need to treat each other with respect and not penalize drivers just because they are poor or unemployed. Being poor is not a crime!!

Respectfully Submitted,


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