

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
300 S.W. TENTH AVENUE
TOPEKA, KS 66612
(785) 296-7447
Russ.Jennings@house.ks.gov



DISTRICT OFFICE
P.O. BOX 295
LAKIN, KANSAS 67860
(620) 290-1545
jrussj@gmail.com

J. RUSSELL JENNINGS
122ND DISTRICT

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HB 2448
Proponent Testimony
House Financial Institutions and Pensions Committee

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

HB 2448 provides for including corrections officers at both adult and juvenile correctional facilities to become members of the Kansas Police and Fire Retirement System. I have brought this legislation in response to the crisis our Department of Corrections is experiencing in the recruitment and retention of corrections officers.

The KP&F retirement plan is currently available to essentially first responders. First responders experience high levels of potential danger and extraordinary stress in their performance public safety duties. The result of a career involving high stress is a shorter life span and an aging out from service. Many of these types of jobs are not work that an individual can safely perform until a regular retirement age of 65.

Corrections officers experience the same exposure to danger and high levels of stress associated with community based public safety work. Their life expectancy is shorter and the demands of the work require physical capacities beyond those of most 60-year-old individuals.

The legislature previously acknowledged that age is a factor in the ability of persons to work into their senior years as a corrections officer. Two special groups, Group A and Group B corrections retirement programs were established which allow for retirement at an earlier age than regular KPERs members. While an earlier normal retirement age is available, the benefit at the time of eligibility is inadequate to provide a meaningful opportunity to retire.

Adoption of HB 2448 will lead to a more stable workforce in our prisons and will also provide an employee benefit that acknowledges and addresses the life implications for having served in a critical public safety role on behalf of the people of Kansas.