

Before the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee
by Zack Pistora, Kansas Sierra Club
Neutral to SB 13
January 12th, 2021



Madam Chair Tyson and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit neutral testimony on Senate bill 13, which establishes notice and public hearing requirements concerning property taxes. We do not offer any comments about the substance of this issue, just process.

Ironically, today's hearing on notice and public hearing requirements lacked advanced notice and leeway for the public to engage this public policy in any meaningful way.

Democracy is, fundamentally, a conversation. It's a conversation among citizens about how to order their affairs—how to mount a common defense, how best to invest in the common good, how to balance liberty with responsibility toward others, how to safeguard opportunity for the next generations to whom we are merely ancestors.

Unfortunately, this committee is having a conversation without giving an opportunity for one of our most important stakeholders a chance to weigh in: the general public.

Our major concern is that hearings should NOT happen with less than 24 hours advanced notice. Most committees allow at least 48 hours between notice (written in the calendar) and a hearing, and in these difficult times, perhaps more flexibility and courtesy are warranted. This is not the way to conduct the business of the people in an unusual and perhaps already-difficult session. The public deserves ample time to weigh in and engage in the civic discourse.

Please allow for at least 48 hours of time between notice and hearing for future legislation, and table SB 13 to allow the public more time for policy review.

Lawmakers, thank you for your leadership and public service to Kansas.

Sincerely,

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The Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enjoying our great outdoors. The Kansas Chapter represents our state's strongest grassroots voice on environmental matters for more than forty years now.