

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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DOUG BLEX
12TH DISTRICT

Chairman Senator Jeff Longbine and Committee Members

SB 225 is the Act that would allow Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism law enforcement officers to affiliate with Kansas police and fireman's fund. I have been working on this bill in House Financial Institutions and Pensions Committee for the past four years. I am a retired wildlife biologist/public lands supervisor. I served 27 years with KDWPT. During that time, I was credentialed as a law enforcement officer and supervising 9 credentialed officers. I became very aware of the danger wildlife officers encounter daily. Several experiences were from officers working for me and a few were personal to me. Wildlife officers usually work alone with no real close backup. Rural areas that are isolated and response time from another officer, generally a local sheriff's officer, is nearly 30 minutes. This can be very stressful when dealing with groups where all will be carrying a firearm. The wildlife officer must be on intense level of alertness to maintain his or her personal safety. Several times on remote wildlife areas I came upon cultivated marijuana fields that became very stressful and just made the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

Wildlife officers respond as backup for other local law enforcement officers and you never know what situation you may be placed in. Wildlife officers are generally first responders on any drowning and many times search and rescue boats are launched into flood swollen and dangerous situations. I have been involved in rescue of duck hunters capsized in frigid waters placing myself and other officers in danger.

Working holiday weekends on public parks and lakes places wildlife and parks officers in contact with drunken boaters, domestic crimes and drug issues. Many of the public parks will "swell" to a population of a small city on weekends, again without an adequate number of backup officers.

In conclusion, I respectfully ask that you support the passage of SB 225 and allow wildlife and parks law enforcement officers to be eligible for Kansas Police and Fireman's retirement system. This is overdue and funds required will not be coming from State General Fund, but Wildlife Fee Fund.

Rep. Doug Blex

House District 12, Kansas House of Representatives