

January __, 2021
Title [Name of Representative or Senator]
300 SW 10th Ave #511
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear _____,

The City of Bel Aire's governing body recently met to rank our legislative priorities for the 2021 legislative session. Bel Aire City Council officially adopted the following legislative policy at our January 19th meeting. As one of the fastest growing cities in Kansas, Bel Aire is focused on maintaining a high quality of life for residents by providing public safety coverage, street improvements, and community amenities--without raising local taxes. With that in mind, our Governing Body respectfully requests your support in repealing the tax lid, preserving home rule, backing K-254 infrastructure funding, mental health provisions, and public safety.

- 1. Tax Lid Repeal:** Any tax lid limits cities ability to legislate and spend funds that are raised locally. The current tax lid is a hindrance to Bel Aire and our spending abilities. Property taxes make up forty percent of the City of Bel Aire's total revenues. These funds are used to provide local public safety, maintain public parks & recreational facilities, and to repair and improve streets. Each year, the City's budget process focuses on maintaining high service delivery levels while being as efficient as possible with tax payer money. The result has been no tax rate (mill levy) increases over the last five years and no increases are anticipated for the near future. When new homes are constructed in Bel Aire, additional tax revenues are generated due to the assessed valuation (total value of all property within the City) increasing. However, the large increase in growth requires new infrastructure, more public improvements and public safety additions that outpace the CPI. The demand for municipal services continues to increase as we grow in population. Having a restrictive tax lid in place greatly inhibits our ability to provide an appropriate level of service to a growing city. **We urge you to leave local tax and spending decisions to local elected officials who ultimately answer to our local voters.**
- 2. Home Rule and Properly Funded Mandates:** Home Rule is key to the success of cities to govern themselves based on citizen input and desires. Consistent with the Home Rule Amendment of the Kansas Constitution approved by voters in 1960, we support local elected officials making decisions for their communities, particularly local tax and revenue decisions. Any state or Federal mandates should heavily consider the Home Rule Amendment *and* be properly funded. Legislative requirements from the state or federal governments imposed on cites without proper funding negatively impacts the budgets of cities. **Strongly support home rule. Oppose any legislative mandates unless properly funded.**

3. **K254 Public Infrastructure:** Regional and local growth for southcentral Kansas are tied into State support of prioritizing K-254 safety and infrastructure improvements. Bel Aire values the promotion of safety, economic development, growth, road improvements and other infrastructure related objectives along K-254 in the interest of the public good.
4. **Mental Health:** Support the State prioritizing the allocation additional resources for mental health programs and studying solutions to this Statewide problem (pp 5 & 9).
5. **Law Enforcement and Public Safety:** Our police department is committed to treating each person they encounter with dignity and respect. The police department has appropriate policies on the use of force, officer intervention, and training for critical situations already in place.
 - **Police Body/Vehicle or Other Camera Videos:** The desire for public transparency needs to be balanced with the need to protect the innocent and assure the cities are not unduly burdened. Additionally, the redaction process required before a video is released pursuant to a court order or subpoena is an expensive and time-consuming process. Whether the order is from a local, state or federal court, there must be adequate personnel, time, and reasonable reimbursement before the release of video evidence.

Our governing body is more than willing to meet with you to discuss how these outlooks can make our community and our State better. We would welcome an email or call if you need additional information from us on specific issues. My email is JBenage@belaireks.gov and I can be reached at (316) 684-0226.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to understand and champion these priorities on behalf of the City of Bel Aire. Our citizens truly appreciate your time and commitment as our Senator/Representative. You continue to be a strong supporter and friend of Bel Aire which is a great honor. Thank you for all you do in Topeka.

Respectfully,

Mayor Jim Benage