

TESTIMONY
ON SFY 2012 STATE BUDGET
LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAM
By the Kansas Environmental Health Association

I respectfully request:

Do not eliminate the Local Environmental Protection Program (LEPP) portion of the State budget.

This money is necessary for the proper and continued operation of this very successful program. Pollution prevention is more cost effective than curing a pollution problem after it occurs.

Since its beginning in 1989, the Local Environmental Protection Plan grants have provided revenue to support the development of environmental programs at the local level. This program is unique to Kansas and the first program of its kind in the state. Its success has been remarkable.

Kansas Facts:

1. The program is **required by State Law K.S.A. 75-5657.**
2. This is the **only financial support given to local governments** which **promotes and funds local control** , **prevention**, and **regulation** of a broad base of water related problems.
3. Local environmental **technical assistance is now available to 99% of the state's population.** If LEP Programs disappear, who will license private wastewater system installers, septic tank pumpers, inspect private wastewater systems, inspect private wells, handle local solid waste issues, or respond to environmental and sanitation complaints? There will be virtually no registered environmental health professionals working indirectly for the State of Kansas.
4. Prior to 1990, **only 12 counties had locally adopted sanitary codes and staff.** There were only two state sanitarians to cover the remaining Kansas counties. The program has encouraged successful outreach between counties in areas where funding was limited.
5. **Educational materials specific to Kansas (e.g. *Environmental Health Handbook*) have been developed to provide current information on private sewage systems and water wells.** The effort to compile this reference book got its impetus from the LEP Program. Three organizations were originally involved: the Kansas Association of Sanitarians, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and Kansas State University. **Local officials are educated through written materials** sent out by the KDHE and

- KSU **and** through regular **training sessions** sponsored by the KDHE and other professional organizations.
6. Development of the Environmental Health Handbook led to the **update and revision of state standards for private wastewater systems (KDHE Bulletin 4-2)**.
 7. Organizations such as the **Kansas Small Flows Association** an organization whose goal is to train on-site installers and regulators have come into existence.
 8. **Special projects have expanded our knowledge of groundwater quality in Kansas.** In 1994 LEPP cooperated with the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and other agencies to complete one of the largest well surveys ever conducted in the United States. Wells across the Midwest were tested for Nitrate, Bacteria, Lead and Radon. Such a process would have been extremely difficult or impossible without the LEP Program.

LEPP Facts:

1. **The State of Kansas** established **contracts with counties** for environmental services.
2. **Databases and filing systems were developed** for water and wastewater systems installed at rural private residences in Kansas where they never had existed previously.
3. Several **local surveys of groundwater quality** have been conducted across the State of Kansas.
4. A **protocol for soil testing** prior to wastewater system installation was developed.
5. **Working relationships** developed with the **Kansas Soil Conservation Service and Kansas State University**.
6. **New sanitation codes** have been written and approved by KDHE.

The Cost:

Money has been very well spent. **No other local environmental program has been more successful.**

1. The State of Kansas has invested about \$33 million over 22 years in the LEP Program. The LEPP budgets have been dramatically cut over the last several years. In **SFY 2010** the average **cost was \$.35 per citizen in Kansas.**
2. **Average total cost** (salaries & wages, commodities, etc.) per hour of LEPP service is about **\$31 per hour (local cost)** compared to a cost for the **state agency** to complete these services of about **\$40 per hour.**
3. Most if not all counties have added dollars and cost shared to support local programs. **Loss of grant dollars will result in the loss of local programs.**
4. **Elimination of the LEP Program will negatively impact local, state, and federal programs** and reduce the ability of the State of Kansas to serve and benefit our citizens.
5. **Program maintenance will be eliminated** with the loss of funding.
6. Funding for **most special projects will be eliminated.**
7. LEP staff continues to provide services even when existing salaries are not keeping up with cost of living increases.
8. The elimination of the LEP Program will result in a misuse of \$33 million tax payer dollars. Highly trained field staff will turn to other jobs and our knowledge base will be lost. Kansas will return to the inadequate efforts existing prior to LEPP to prevent water pollution.