

The Impact of TABOR on Public Safety in Kansas

TABOR, the most rigid tax and expenditure limitation in the country, has been proposed in Kansas. If this constitutional amendment had been in place in Kansas over the last decade, significantly fewer dollars would have been available for public safety.

A recent report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities entitled, *A State of Decline: What a TABOR Would Mean for Kansas*, illustrates the potential magnitude and impact of such a measure. The report demonstrates that if a TABOR limit had been in effect since Fiscal Year 1993, there would have been a total of \$890 million less available to the state in FY 2005. For the sake of discussion, the report assumes that total expenditures would be reduced to the permitted level by cutting all areas of state expenditures proportionally.

TABOR Would Reduce the Amount of Funding Available for Correctional Facilities

Kansas' inmate population increased 30 percent in the past decade and is projected to increase by 15 percent in the next decade. Meanwhile, if TABOR had been in place, state funding for correctional facilities would have been \$25 million less than it actually was in FY 2005. Cutting \$25 million from the corrections budget would limit the state's ability to follow current incarceration policies.

- A \$25 million cut could require incarceration of about 1,300 fewer inmates: one out of every seven inmates in state corrections facilities in 2005.
- Kansas could also respond to a \$25 million reduction by cutting 610, or 22 percent, of the employees in the state's eight correctional facilities. This magnitude of a staff deficit would require the release of a substantial number of prisoners to avoid endangering the safety of the correction personnel and the inmates.
- As an alternative to spreading cuts across facilities, Kansas could save \$25 million by closing the Hutchinson correctional facility, the El Dorado correctional facility, or both the Norton and Topeka correctional facilities.

TABOR Would Require Additional Cuts in Other Areas of Public Safety.

If TABOR had been in place in Kansas since FY 1993, all other public safety agencies would have had \$37 million less funding, in addition to the \$25 million cut from the budget for correctional facilities. One way in which this could be accomplished is by combining the following measures.

- Kansas could cut \$ 27 million in public safety spending by reducing about 461 employees at the Kansas Highway Patrol, and
- The state could save just over 8 million dollars by closing the Larned Juvenile Correctional Facility, which would reduce the capacity of the juvenile correctional system to house 152 juvenile offenders with substance abuse and mental health issues.