HOUSE BILL No. 2337

By Committee on Judiciary

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AN ACT concerning the Kansas false claims act; amending K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7501, 75-7502, 75-7503, 75-7504, 75-7505 and 75-7506 and repealing the existing sections.

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Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

Section 1. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7501 is hereby amended to read as follows: 75-7501. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7501 through 75-7511 *and sections 7 through 9*, and amendments thereto, shall be known and may be cited as the "Kansas false claims act."

- Sec. 2. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7502 is hereby amended to read as follows: 75-7502. For purposes of this act:
 - (a) "Act" means the Kansas false claims act.
- (b) "Claim" includes any request or demand, whether under contract or otherwise, for money, property or services, regardless of whether the state or any political subdivision thereof has title to the money or property, that is made to any employee, officer or agent of the state or any political subdivision thereof or made to any contractor, grantee or other recipient if: (1) The money, property or service is to be spent or used on behalf of the state or any political subdivision thereof or to advance a program or interest of the state or any political subdivision thereof; and (2) the state or any political subdivision thereof; and portion of the money,
- property or services which is requested or demanded, or if the state (B) will reimburse such contractor, grantee or other recipient for any portion of the money or property which is requested or demanded.
 - (c) "Political subdivision" includes political or taxing subdivisions of the state, including municipal and quasi-municipal corporations, boards, commissions, authorities, councils, committees, subcommittees and other subordinate groups or administrative units thereof, receiving or expending and supported, in whole or in part, by public funds and any municipality as defined in K.S.A. 75-1117, and amendments thereto.
- (d) "Person" includes any natural person, corporation, firm, association, organization, partnership, business or trust.
- (e) "Knowing" and "knowingly" mean that a person, with respect to information, does any of the following:
 - (1) Has actual knowledge of the information;
 - (2) acts in deliberate ignorance of the truth or falsity of the

information; or

- (3) acts in reckless disregard of the truth or falsity of the information. *Proof of specific intent to defraud is not required.*
- (f) "Material" means having a natural tendency to influence, or be capable of influencing, the payment or receipt of money or property.
- (g) "Obligation" means an established duty, whether or not fixed, arising from an express or implied contractual, grantor-grantee or licensor-licensee relationship, from a fee-based or similar relationship, from statute, rule or regulation or from the retention of any overpayment.
- Sec. 3. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503 is hereby amended to read as follows: 75-7503. (a) A person who commits any of the following acts shall be liable to the state or any affected political subdivision thereof, for three times the amount of damages which the state or such political subdivision sustains because of the act of that person and shall be liable to the state for a civil penalty of not less than \$1,000 and not more than \$11,000 for each violation. A person found to have committed any of the following acts shall be liable to the state or such affected political subdivision for all reasonable costs and attorney fees incurred in a civil action brought to recover any of those penalties or damages. The following unlawful acts constitute violations for which damages, civil penalties, costs and attorney fees may be recovered by a civil action under this act. A person commits an unlawful act if the person:
- (1) Knowingly presents or causes to be presented to any employee, officer or agent of the state or political subdivision thereof or to any contractor, grantee or other recipient of state funds or funds of any political subdivision thereof, a false or fraudulent claim for payment or approval;
- (2) knowingly makes, uses or causes to be made or used, a false record or statement—to get material to a false or fraudulent claim—paid or approved;
- (3) defrauds the state or any political subdivision thereof by getting a false claim allowed or paid or by knowingly making, using or causing to be made or used, a false record or statement to coneeal, avoid or decrease knowingly makes, uses or causes to be made or used, a false record or statement material to an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the state or any political subdivision thereof, or knowingly conceals or knowingly and improperly avoids or decreases an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the state or to any political subdivision thereof;
- (4) has possession, custody or control of <u>public</u> property or money used or to be used by the state or any political subdivision thereof and knowingly delivers or causes to be delivered less *than all of such* property or money than the amount for which the person receives a certificate or receipt;

 (5) is authorized to make or deliver a document certifying receipt of property used or to be used by the state or any political subdivision thereof and knowingly makes or delivers a receipt that falsely represents the property received, intending to defraud the state or any political subdivision thereof, makes or delivers the receipt without completely knowing that the information on the receipt is true;

- (6) knowingly buys or receives as a pledge of an obligation or debt, public property from any person who lawfully may not sell or pledge the property;
- (7) is a beneficiary of an inadvertent submission of a false claim to any employee, officer or agent of the state or political subdivision thereof, or to any contractor, grantee or other recipient of state funds or funds of any political subdivision thereof, who subsequently discovers the falsity of the claim and fails to disclose the false claim and make satisfactory arrangements for repayment to the state or affected political subdivision thereof within a reasonable time after discovery of the false claim; *or*
- (8) conspires to commit any violation set forth in paragraphs (1) through (7), above.
- (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), the court may assess not more than two times the amount of damages which the state or any political subdivision thereof sustains because of the act of the person in violation of paragraphs (1) through (8) of subsection (a) and no civil penalty shall be imposed, if the court finds all of the following:
- (1) The person committing the violation furnished officials of the state who are responsible for investigating false claims violations with all information known to that person about the violation within 30 days after the date on which the person first obtained the information;
- (2) the person fully cooperated with any investigation by the state; and
- (3) at the time the person furnished the state with information about the violation, no criminal prosecution, civil action or administrative action had commenced with respect to the violation and the person did not have actual knowledge of the existence of an investigation into the violation.
- (e) In a civil action brought pursuant to subsection (a), proof of specific intent to defraud is not required. An innocent mistake shall be a defense to an action under this act.
- $\frac{(d)}{(c)}$ This section does not apply to claims, records or statements related to state taxation law made pursuant to chapter 79 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.
- Sec. 4. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7504 is hereby amended to read as follows: 75-7504. (a) The attorney general shall diligently investigate a violation-under of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto. If the attorney general finds that a person has violated or is violating K.S.A.

2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, the attorney general may bring a civil action under this section against that person. Further, the attorney general may utilize the assistance of city and county attorneys in cases involving their respective political subdivisions or may utilize funds available pursuant to K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7508, and amendments thereto, to engage the services of private attorneys to assist in carrying out the purposes of this act, or both, at times when the attorney general determines the need exists. All local prosecutors and private attorneys shall only participate at the request, and under the direction of, the attorney general.

- (b) Except as provided in K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7506 and sections 8 and 9, and amendments thereto, nothing in this act shall be construed to create a private cause of action.
- Sec. 5. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7505 is hereby amended to read as follows: 75-7505. (a) A civil action-under for a violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, may not be brought:
- (1) More than 6 years after the date on which the violation was committed; or
- (2) more than 3 years after the date on which the violation was discovered or reasonably should have been discovered facts material to the right of action are known or reasonably should have been known by the attorney general, but in no event more than 10 years after the date on which the violation was committed, whichever occurs last.
- (b) A civil action-under for a violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, may be brought for activity prior to the effective date of this act, or for activity prior to the effective date of any amendments thereto, if the limitation period set in subsection (a) has not lapsed.
- (c) In any action brought-under for a violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, the state plaintiff shall be required to prove all essential elements of the cause of action, including damages, by a preponderance of the evidence.
- (d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a guilty verdict rendered in a criminal proceeding charging false statements or fraud, whether upon a verdict after trial or upon a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, shall estop the defendant from denying the essential elements of the offense in any action which involves the same transaction as in the criminal proceeding and which is brought under for a violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto.
- Sec. 6. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7506 is hereby amended to read as follows: 75-7506. (a) Any A person, including an employee, contractor or agent who is discharged, demoted, suspended, threatened, harassed or in any other manner retaliated against in the terms and conditions of

employment—by such employee's employer because of a lawful—aets act undertaken—in good faith by the employee on behalf of the employee or others, by the person or associated others in furtherance of an action under this act, or other efforts to stop one or more violations of this act, including investigation for, initiation of, testimony for, or assistance in an action filed or to be filed under this act, shall be entitled to—all relief necessary to make the employee whole: (1) Reinstatement with the same seniority status the person would have had but for the discrimination; and (2) not less than two times the amount of back pay, interest on the back pay and compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the discrimination, including litigation costs and reasonable attorney fees.

- (b) An employee A person may bring an action in the appropriate district court for the relief provided in this section.
- (c) A person must bring suit on an action under this section within three years after the date on which the retaliation occurred.
- (d) This section shall not be construed to create any private cause of action for violations of this act and is limited to the remedies expressly created by this section related to employment retaliation.

New Sec. 7. (a) Except as provided in section 8, and amendments thereto, a person who commits any of the acts prohibited by K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, shall be liable to the state or any affected political subdivision thereof, for three times the amount of damages which the state or such political subdivision sustains because of the act of that person and shall be liable to the state for a civil penalty of not less than \$1,000 and not more than \$11,000 for each violation. A person found to have committed any of the acts prohibited by K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, shall be liable to the state or such affected political subdivision for all reasonable costs and attorney fees incurred in a civil action brought to recover any of those penalties or damages.

- (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), the court may assess not more than two times the amount of damages that the state or any political subdivision thereof sustains because of the act of the person in violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, and no civil penalty shall be imposed, if the court finds all of the following:
- (1) The person committing the violation furnished officials of the state who are responsible for investigating false claims violations with all information known to that person about the violation within 30 days after the date on which the person first obtained the information;
- (2) the person fully cooperated with any investigation by the state; and
- (3) at the time the person furnished the state with information about the violation, no criminal prosecution, civil action or administrative action

 had commenced with respect to the violation and the person did not have actual knowledge of the existence of an investigation into the violation.

New Sec. 8. (a) A person found to have committed an unlawful act under K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, with respect to any expenditure described in 42 U.S.C. § 1396b(a), is liable to the state for three times the amount of damages that the state or such political subdivision sustains because of the act of that person and shall be liable to the state for a civil penalty of not less than \$10,781 and not more than \$21,563 for each violation. Such person shall also be liable to the state or such affected political subdivision for all reasonable costs and attorney fees incurred in a civil action brought to recover any of those penalties or damages.

- (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), the court may assess not less than two times the amount of damages that the state or any political subdivision thereof sustains because of the act of the person in violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, with respect to any expenditure described in 42 U.S.C. § 1396b(a), if the court finds all of the following:
- (1) The person committing the violation furnished officials of the state who are responsible for investigating false claims violations with all information known to that person about the violation within 30 days after the date on which the person first obtained the information;
- (2) the person fully cooperated with any investigation by the state; and
- (3) at the time the person furnished the state with information about the violation, no criminal prosecution, civil action or administrative action had commenced with respect to the violation and the person did not have actual knowledge of the existence of an investigation into the violation.
- New Sec. 9. (a) The provisions of this section shall apply only to a civil action for a violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, in which the unlawful act is a claim regarding an expenditure described in 42 U.S.C. \S 1396b(a).
- (b) (1) A person may bring a civil action described in subsection (a) for the person and for the state or any subdivision thereof. The action shall be brought in the name of the person and of the state or the subdivision thereof. The action may be dismissed only if the court and the attorney general give written consent to the dismissal and their reasons for consenting.
- (2) When a person brings an action described in subsection (a), no person other than the attorney general, on behalf of the state or any subdivision thereof, may intervene or bring a related action based on the facts underlying the pending action.
 - (3) The state shall not be liable for expenses that a person incurs in

bringing an action under this section.

- (c) (1) A copy of the petition and written disclosure of substantially all material evidence and information the person possesses shall be served on the attorney general in accordance with the rules of civil procedure.
- (2) The petition shall be filed in camera and shall remain under seal for at least 180 days from the date the petition is filed, or until the date on which the attorney general either elects or declines to intervene, whichever is earlier. The petition shall not be served on the defendant until the court so orders.
- (3) The attorney general may elect to intervene and proceed with the action within 180 days after receiving both the complaint and the material evidence and information.
- (4) The attorney general may, for good cause shown, move the court to extend the 180-day deadline under paragraph (2) or (3). Such motion may be supported by affidavits or other submissions in camera.
- (5) Within 180 days after receiving both the complaint and the material evidence and information, or before the expiration of any extensions obtained under paragraph (4), the attorney general shall:
- (A) Proceed with the action, in which case the action shall be conducted by the attorney general; or
- (B) notify the court that the attorney general declines to take over the action, in which case the person bringing the action shall have the right to conduct the action.
- (6) If the attorney general intervenes, the attorney general may file a motion with the court requesting that the petition remain under seal for an extended period.
- (7) The defendant shall not be required to respond to any petition filed under this section until the complaint is unsealed and served upon the defendant in accordance with the rules of civil procedure.
- (d) If the attorney general proceeds with the action, the state has the primary responsibility for prosecuting the action and is not bound by an act of the person bringing the action. The person bringing the action has the right to continue as a party to the action, subject to the limitations of this subsection.
- (1) The attorney general may dismiss the action, notwithstanding the objections of the person bringing the action, if: (A) The attorney general notifies the person that the state has filed a motion to dismiss; and (B) the court provides the person with an opportunity for a hearing on the motion.
- (2) The attorney general may settle the action with the defendant, notwithstanding the objections of the person bringing the action, if the court determines, after a hearing, that the proposed settlement is fair, adequate and reasonable under all the circumstances. On a showing of good cause, the hearing may be held in camera.

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 (3) On a showing by the state that unrestricted participation during the course of the litigation by the person bringing the action would interfere with or unduly delay the state's prosecution of the case, or would be repetitious, irrelevant or for purposes of harassment, the court may impose limitations on the person's participation, including, but not limited to:

- (A) Limiting the number of witnesses the person may call;
- (B) limiting the length of the testimony of witnesses called by the person;
 - (C) limiting the person's cross-examination of witnesses; and
 - (D) otherwise limiting the participation by the person in the litigation.
- (4) On a showing by the defendant that unrestricted participation during the course of the litigation by the person bringing the action would be for purposes of harassment or would cause the defendant undue burden or unnecessary expense, the court may limit the participation by the person in the litigation.
- (5) If the attorney general elects to intervene and proceed with the action, the attorney general may file a separate complaint or amend the complaint of a person who has brought the action to clarify or add detail to the claims in which the attorney general is intervening and to add any additional claims with respect to which the attorney general contends entitlement to relief. For statute of limitations purposes, any such pleading of the attorney general shall relate back to the filing date of the complaint of the person who originally brought the action, to the extent that the claim of the attorney general arises out of the conduct, transactions or occurrences set forth, or attempted to be set forth, in the prior complaint of that person.
- (e) (1) If the attorney general declines to take over the action, the person bringing the action may proceed without the state's participation.
- (2) If the person bringing the action proceeds without the attorney general's participation, the court, without limiting the status and right of that person, may permit the attorney general to intervene at a later date on a showing of good cause, notwithstanding the time limitations provided in subsection (c).
- (3) On request by the attorney general, the attorney general is entitled to be served with copies of all pleadings filed in the action and be provided, at the attorney general's expense, with copies of all deposition transcripts.
- (f) Regardless of whether the attorney general proceeds with the action, on a showing by the attorney general that certain actions of discovery by the person bringing the action would interfere with the attorney general's investigation or prosecution of a criminal or civil matter arising out of the same facts, the court may stay the discovery for a period

not to exceed 60 days. The court shall hear any motion to stay discovery under this subsection in camera. The court may extend the 60-day period on a further showing in camera that the attorney general has pursued the criminal or civil investigation or proceedings with reasonable diligence and that any proposed discovery in the civil action will interfere with the ongoing criminal or civil investigation or proceedings.

- (g) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the attorney general may elect to pursue the state's claim through any alternate remedy available to the state, including any administrative proceeding to determine an administrative penalty. If an alternate remedy is pursued in another proceeding, the person bringing the action has the same rights in the other proceeding as the person would have had if the action had continued under this section.
- (2) A finding of fact or conclusion of law made in the other proceeding that has become final is conclusive on all parties to an action under this section. For purposes of this subsection, a finding or conclusion is final if:
- (A) The finding or conclusion has been finally determined on appeal to the appropriate court;
- (B) no appeal has been filed with respect to the finding or conclusion and all time for filing an appeal has expired; or
 - (C) the finding or conclusion is not subject to judicial review.
- (h) (1) If the attorney general proceeds with an action under this section, the person bringing the action is entitled, except as provided in paragraph (4), to receive at least 15%, but not more than 25%, of the proceeds of the action, depending on the extent to which the person substantially contributed to the prosecution of the action. Where the action is one that the court finds to be based primarily on disclosures of specific information, other than information provided by the person bringing the action, relating to allegations or transactions in a criminal, civil or administrative hearing, in a legislative or administrative report, hearing, audit or investigation, or from the news media, the court may award such sums as it considers appropriate, but in no case more than 10% of the proceeds, taking into account the significance of the information and the role of the person bringing the action in advancing the case to litigation.
- (2) If the attorney general does not proceed with an action under this section, the person bringing the action or settling the claim shall receive an amount that the court decides is reasonable for collecting the civil penalty and damages. Except as provided in paragraph (4), the amount shall be at least 25%, but not more than 30%, of the proceeds of the action. The entitlement of a person under this subsection is not affected by any subsequent intervention in the action by the state in accordance with subsection (e).

(3) A payment to a person under this section shall be made from the proceeds of the action. A person receiving a payment under this section is also entitled to receive from the defendant an amount for reasonable expenses, reasonable attorney fees and costs that the court finds to have been necessarily incurred. The court's determination of expenses, fees and costs to be awarded under this subsection shall be made only after the defendant has been found liable in the action or the claim is settled, and shall be awarded against the defendant.

- (4) (A) If the court finds that the action was brought by a person who planned and initiated the violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, on which the action was brought, the court may, to the extent the court considers appropriate, reduce the share of the proceeds of the action the person would otherwise receive under this section, taking into account the person's role in advancing the case to litigation and any relevant circumstances pertaining to the violation.
- (B) If the person bringing the action is convicted of criminal conduct arising from the person's role in the violation of K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7503, and amendments thereto, on which the action was brought, the court shall dismiss the person from the civil action and the person may not receive any share of the proceeds of the action. A dismissal under this subsection does not prejudice the right of the state to continue the action.
- (5) If the attorney general does not proceed with the action and the person bringing the action conducts the action, the court may award to the defendant its reasonable attorney fees and expenses if the defendant prevails in the action and the court finds that the claim of the person bringing the action was clearly frivolous, clearly vexatious or brought primarily for purposes of harassment.
- (i) (1) A person may not bring an action under this section that is based on allegations or transactions that are the subject of a civil suit or an administrative penalty proceeding in which the state is already a party.
- (2) The court shall dismiss an action or claim under this section, unless opposed by the attorney general, if substantially the same allegations or transactions as alleged in the action or claim were publicly disclosed in a Kansas or federal criminal or civil hearing in which the state or an agent of the state is a party, in a Kansas legislative or administrative report, or other Kansas hearing, audit or investigation, or from the news media, unless the person bringing the action is an original source of the information.
 - (i) As used in this section:
- (1) "Proceeds of the action" includes proceeds of a settlement of a claim; and
 - (2) "original source" means an individual who:
 - (A) Either: (i) Prior to a public disclosure, has voluntarily disclosed

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to the state or a subdivision thereof the information on which allegations or transactions in a claim are based; or (ii) has knowledge that is independent of and materially adds to the publicly disclosed allegations or transactions; and

- (B) has voluntarily provided the information to the state or a subdivision thereof before filing an action.
- Sec. 10. K.S.A. 2016 Supp. 75-7501, 75-7502, 75-7503, 75-7504, 75-7505 and 75-7506 are hereby repealed.
- Sec. 11. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.