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TOPEKA  
HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS  
CHAIRMAN: WATER AND ENVIRONMENT  
GOVERNMENT, TECHNOLOGY  
AND SECURITY  
MEMBER: AGRICULTURE  
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES BUDGET

Testimony on HB 2513 – Water & Environment Committee – January 30, 2017

Committee Members:

This session and last, conferee after conferee gave testimony about the need to invest in our water resources – to protect them and extend their productive lives.

Last session and today we heard/will hear that the State General Fund and EDIF money should be appropriated, rather than creating or raising user fees.

From my perspective, there are three reasons to hold this position: 1) the belief that no water crisis exists and thus the failure of Governors and a majority of Legislators to appropriate the funds reflects that position;

2) the belief that the Kansas Supreme Court's decision regarding school finance, the continued obligation to fund current and deferred state contributions to KPERS, the ultimate need to restore funding to maintain the state's highway infrastructure, and increasing social service case load costs are less important than funding the state water plan from the State General Fund;

3) the belief that state revenues will be sufficient in FY 2019 and the foreseeable future to meet all of our statutory and moral requirements.

I am glad that \$1.2 million was added to the water fund from SGF for FY 2018 – but remember this was after passage of an income tax increase that was recognized as raising less money than is needed in future years and before the Kansas Supreme Court's decision regarding school funding.

I do not believe \$8 million SGF and EDIF money will be available in FY 2019, 2020, or for years beyond that.

I do believe that there are vital water issues that must be addressed sooner rather than later. For example, we spent \$20 million to gain 2 ½ years of added water storage at John Redmond Reservoir. Remember that we bonded that investment, so we will be making payments long after the reservoir as resilted. While dredging is necessary in some situations, investments to reduce sedimentation rates, address water quality issues, purchase reservoir storage, fund research to guide policy-making, and other investments are necessary.

The Kansas Rural Water Association last session provided testimony that the average household uses 5,000 gallons of water per month. The proposed 5 cent per 1,000 gallons of water sold at retail would cost customers, on average, 25 cents per month. The 5 cents will not raise \$8 million per year, that would take at least an 8 cent per 1,000 gallons per month fee.

*Attachment 2  
HWE 1-30-18*

The proposed fee on Water Assurance Districts recognizes the Districts have a vested interest in preserving the storage capacity of the reservoirs. While they currently minimally contribute for their share of the water stored in the reservoirs, they do not contribute to protecting the reservoirs' capacity. HB 2513 would require the Districts to contribute to protecting their long-term interests.

HB 2513 recognizes that our ultimate goal is to protect our state's surface water supply and water quality. The short-term objective is to minimally fund the water plan in the absence of SGF and EDIF monies. Remember, the Blue Ribbon Committee's recommendation is for \$55 million per year be expended on water programs and projects. Opponents of HB 2513 endorse the Blue Ribbon Committee's recommendations, but do not offer any suggestions as to how it will be funded beyond the SGF/EDIF's \$8 million.

The language in HB 2513 specifically provides that the fee created in the bill can be suspended when/if the SGF and EDIF funds are restored by the Governor and Legislature.

Committee members, all of you have stated your support for funding water preservation and protection programs. If you believe that SGF/EDIF funding is the correct course of action, I challenge you to write a letter to the Speaker, Majority and Minority Leaders, and Appropriations Committee leaders stating that water plan funding must be the priority. I challenge you to mobilize your constituents and the interest groups present today to contact the same legislative and committee leaders. Finally, I encourage you to make copies of your letters available to the other members of this committee.

Committee members, if you believe the water plan needs to be funded, but you do not believe that SGF/EDIF funds will be available, you have two choices: 1) support HB 2513, or 2) suggest through amendments to HB 2513 alternative funding options.

I have been working for 15 years to increase funding for the water plan. Whether this is a personal failure or a systemic one, the needs only grow with time and become more expensive to solve. There is no water crisis today, and you will not be defeated in the 2018 election if you do not act. But I ask you, if not now, when? If not HB 2513, what?

Thank you and I will respond to questions.