

Kansas Farm Bureau
PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT

SENATE UTILITIES COMMITTEE

Re: SB 455—The Industrial Wind Turbine Act

February 23, 2004
Topeka, Kansas

Presented by:
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Chairman Clark and members of the Senate Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I am Terry Holdren and I serve as Associate State Director—Governmental Relations for Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB). As you know Kansas Farm Bureau, (KFB) is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 40,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau Associations.

We come before you today in opposition to SB 455. This legislation, would prohibit development of wind farms in undisturbed natural areas of the flint hills region, and would only allow development of wind farms after a lengthy permit process and a showing by the developer that the proposal would have zero impact on the area surrounding the farm. In essence, this bill will close down the Flint Hills to wind development.

Kansas ranks high in wind velocity—3rd in the nation in total wind potential behind North Dakota and Texas. Those three states have the potential to supply enough energy to meet the needs of all of the lower 48 states. Kansas Farm Bureau, through its yearlong policy development process, has adopted language, which supports the development of wind as a renewable energy resource. A resource, which could play a significant role in revitalizing the Kansas economy. It is imperative that we recruit appropriate agencies, and interested parties to study this source of renewable energy and develop a plan, with incentives, to encourage wind generation in Kansas.

To contribute to the discussion and development of a plan to address this issue, Mike Irvin, Director of the KFB Legal Foundation, currently serves on the Governor's Prairie Wind Energy Task Force. We believe that this group—through study and

discussion of the concerns and interests of all Kansans will produce a well-reasoned plan for the development of this resource in Kansas.

We share the concern of many in protecting the natural resources and historic and scenic value that exists in the Flint Hills, the Smoky Hills, and many other regions across the state. Success in protecting those resources is dependent upon partnering and cooperation involving government agencies, agriculture, homeowners, and natural resource and environmental interests. All of these groups must come to the table to increase public awareness and encourage appropriate action.

Ultimately this legislation will eliminate the possibility of wind development within the Flint Hills. As you know, KFB has long and vigorously supported landowners rights. Given that history and our belief that those who own and operate land should have the responsibility for land use and development; we believe that government should not halt development nor limit the size of any business.

Finally, we believe that local governments are the appropriate place for this debate to occur. Our members understand the need for cultural development and the protection of our resources. We have long encouraged them to become involved in planning and development of zoning ordinances to prevent undesirable land use patterns. These activities are best addressed at the local level.

If the committee feels it must act at this time, we would encourage consideration of alternatives to perpetual bans on any development of wind resources in the area—possibly an interim study of the issue, which would allow the legislature to better understand the impacts of this proposal. Likewise, this would provide time for discussion of the issue and possible action on the local level to address concerns there.

KFB stands ready to participate in the discussion and development of this valuable resource. Thank you.