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In reference to HB 2003 Rep. by Mike Houser

To the Chairman and Members of the Local Government Committee,

My name is Randy French. I live in Cherokee Count Kansas, and my home is located ¼ of a mile west of the proposed Galena landfill site at the corner of Alt. 69-400 HWY and Lostine Rd. My home is a modest old farm house that is 1800 sq. ft with 15 acres of land. I also have a small business, my personal art studio, called "Studio 67." I inherited my home in 1998, and I have lived there since that time. I am the fifth generation to in live in this house, and I am very proud of that fact. On July 9, 2014, I became aware of the city of Galena's plan to put a landfill on the property at the NE corner of Alt. 69-400 and Lostine Rd. At the time I was working on a remodel of the interior of my home, and I was also in the planning stages for some improvements to the exterior barns and property. However, after hearing of Galena's planned landfill just a ¼ of mile to the east of me, I am having second thoughts to any more improvements. I really have mixed feelings about spending my money on a house and property that, even though they will be in great shape, will not be valued at the amount of their true worth in the future. That is a discouraging way to live, as the hard work and money you put into your home would not be actually reflected in its property and resale value because of a neighboring landfill. If I found myself in the position of needing to sell in the future, I would lose money unjustly due to my property's proximity to a landfill.

In addition to my business, I am also a teacher at Riverton High School, which is part of Riverton USD#404. This 3A school consisting of approximately 850 students is the heart of our small community. I live just two miles north of the school, which makes for a very short daily commute. As an alumni and faculty member of Riverton High School, I am concerned about the impact this proposed annexation and landfill will have on our school district. First, I take issue with another city annexing land that belongs to our school district. Second, as property values decrease, so does our district's assessed valuation, which results in less funding for our school and students. Furthermore, the landfill will make our district less attractive to people who want to move here or to even remain here. Fewer students equals less funding and leads to the slow, but inevitable, decline or even death to Riverton Schools.

I like living and being actively involved in the community where I teach, so I also serve on the Rural Water #2 board. Our water district consists of 45 miles of pipe and pumps 23 million gallons of water annually to the 401 units we serve. This water source originates from one well. A well that is located at the corner of Alt 69-400 and Eldon Road, which is just one mile south of Lostine Road and the proposed annexation and landfill. This annexation puts the clean water of our community at great risk.

This annexation is $\frac{1}{4}$ of mile from my home, one mile away from a water well pumping 23 million gallons a year, and 2 miles from Riverton Schools, yet the city of Galena thought it would be a great place to put a landfill. Note, I said the city of Galena started this endeavor, not the state or the county, and this has infringed upon our community. This annexation of land does not reflect a need or desire of the state or our county. There has been no established, proven need for this annexation that would help the greater good of people. Only the desires and financial gains of a city who WANTS a landfill have been expressed. We lose money, while they profit off of this annexed land. I ask, "What city has the right to infringe upon another community for the purpose of their financial gain?" "What city has a right to harm another community without its consent?"

After learning of Galena's plans, the Riverton community started a committee called the Cherokee Anti-Landfill Group to address these important issues and the impact on our community. Our first meeting had over 500 people in attendance. As the group began to research this issue, we discovered we had few options as we have no vote or representation in this process. For example, even though I have a Galena address, I have no vote for the Galena mayor or city council. If I were a Galena resident, I could go to the city council and voice my opposition to the annexation and landfill, or even exercise my right to vote against the mayor or council members. Even our county commissioners (who should be able to represent us in these matters) had no say in this issue due to the island annexation. In addition, our State Representative Mike Houser, attended our second committee meeting and explained that the island annexation or land grab of our community by the City of Galena left us with no say in the matter. As you can clearly see, island annexation prevents those who are impacted most from this from having adequate representation and say in this matter.

In order to investigate the city of Galena and to have a voice, the anti-landfill committee started a petition for a Grand Jury to investigate the dealings of the city of Galena in all matters related to the landfill and island annexation. We exceeded the amount of required signatures to seat a Grand Jury, and its investigation and proceedings are currently underway.

When I read the bill, HB2003, which Representative Mike Houser introduced, I was pleased and supportive. This bill gives us, the people of the county, a voice, in a matter that impacts us all. As a county and not a city resident, this is the only voice I have as my only vote is for the county commissioners who serve us. While these commissioners SHOULD be able to speak for us in all matters related to the county, they do not with island annexation. I contend that our county commissioners should have an important and final say in what happens to our county because people can be adequately represented by calling and writing their commissioners concerning their opinions on an issue. If people are not happy with the way commissioners represent them or vote, citizens can exercise

their rights to vote at the next election. Galena's mayor states that he is against this bill because he thinks it gives the commissioners too much power. However, I do not see it as "power" as I see it as a voice and representation of the people of this county. Galena's mayor and city council are overstepping their "powers" by infringing upon our rights, voice, and land. Island annexation gives too much power to mayors of cities who want to grab land from other communities without the consent of the voters who live there. Island annexation sets a dangerous precedent in this state and infringes on the rights of many for the gain of a few. With this precedent, there is nothing to stop any city from taking another community's land for any selfish purpose or gain. This means no community in our state is safe from island annexation from happening to them. The people should always have the final say on what happens to their communities....not mayors, businessmen, or developers.