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Committee Chairman and Committee Members,  
Subject: HB2003 (Island Annexation)

Honorable representatives, this letter is in regards to the situation that residents of Riverton KS are facing in regards to Galena city government trying to island annex land north of Riverton (unincorporated) that is approximately 6 or so miles from Galena city limits for the purpose of a landfill. Before I get into my opposition to this, let me give you a little background information about our family and this situation.

My wife I have lived in the Riverton area since 2000. We have adopted three children from Taiwan since 2006, Zachary (9), Elizabeth (8) and Levi (6). We moved to our current home in 2008 in preparation of our second child and needing more room. Being raised in the country, we choose this location because the home size and acreage that came with it. This was our dream location that now is possibly going to be ¼ mile from this landfill. In appropriately May it came out the Galena City council had annexed this land into Galena and had approved a contract with Jordan Disposal to convert this farmland of around 160+ acres into a landfill. Because of public outcry, both city ordinances were rescinded and a moratorium was put in place until now. Galena City officials original reasons for this landfill were their worry the landfills were close to full and the worry that the trash collection prices would skyrocket and hurt those on fixed incomes. Our group that opposes this found out in a rather short amount of time that both of these were false. There are two landfills that Cherokee county uses, one of which has 20+ years of service remaining and has ample room to expand. The price issue was found to be wrong as well when one of the main haulers froze their prices for 10-15 years and offered this to all municipalities in Cherokee County. Now, from information the Mayor has stated, the money raised from this landfill will be used for a future sewer treatment plant. City officials also agreed to have meetings with the opposition, Cherokee County Community Action Group/Cherokee County Anti-landfill, but have yet to do so. We have no problem with a city making money off of something like this, but this is at the expense of another community and residents that do not have a voice or vote in any of this.

We are opposing this for many reasons. First of which is the health risk to our family. Especially our children, one of which has asthma. We never expected to be researching landfills but we have. In the process found out all the health risks that even the EPA have acknowledged. Another worry is this location is 1 mile from Cherokee County Rural Water District #2's well. Also it is less than a mile from a stream that never runs dry that feeds into the Spring River that is also only around a mile from the proposed site. Clean water is and should be important to everyone and according to information from the EPA, it is not a matter of if but when a landfill will start to leach into the ground and ground water. There are also numerous people with private wells in the area, many of which are in the immediate vicinity. Other concerns are for the air quality and the dust that will be produced. With one child with asthma this is a huge concern. Her asthma is currently controlled and she only has flareups when the atmosphere and air is full of dust, pollen and particulates. We know what Kansas wind is like

and they can water the top of this land as much as they want, the air quality will be greatly diminished. Another environment concern we have is what will be deposited in this landfill. The original contract was somewhat vague on this. This is also a concern because from the numbers the Council has quoted they will make in a year's time doesn't add up to the amount of trash Galena produces, or Cherokee county produces as a whole. So where and what will be deposited in this landfill to make up that revenue is a huge unanswered question.

Next is the loss of valuable farmland. Once this land is converted for use as a landfill, it will never be the same. Farmland is diminishing at a very fast pace and we all should be very vigilant in its protection.

Another topic is property values and what happens when they drop. Local, County and State tax revenue will be affected by a drop as well. This may be our dream home and location but we are now in a situation where we want to remodel but with property values going down will it be worth it. For the local school district of Riverton, this will mean less revenue coming as well. As well as the loss of students to other districts because, let's face it, no one wants to live by a landfill. This should be a concern at the state level as well. The reason is many of those who move may very well be moving to the neighboring states of Oklahoma or Missouri. Again less revenue all the way around.

Road conditions. This location and the route to be used by trucks is a major issue. This ties back to the original contract and amount of revenue they expect and where all this "trash" will be coming from. Road surfaces will deteriorate and cause a strain on budgets of those trying to maintain them at the state and local level. The entrance and corner of Lostine and 69th Ave. will also lead to what we fear to be numerous accidents because of its location just over the crown of a hill. Trucks entering and leaving the facility will not be able to accelerate or stop fast enough for traffic that will not be able to see them. This could also be a liability issue for the operator, City and the State.

Public outcry over this is huge. Our group's Facebook page has around 1700 members which is very large for such a small community. In terms of possible voters this is something members of the committee should look very closely at. Obviously it has made those pursuing this change their strategy as well considering the commercials currently running on local TV and Radio as well as a fancy website. I'm sure they also have lobbyists pushing this from the other side. We hope you truly look hard at what this is doing to those who have no recourse. We all believe we live in a country where if a representative at any level does something or passes something a citizen may not like or agree with that we can use our constitutional right to vote at the next election to hold them accountable. With this, the City of Galena is circumventing our right to vote and have our voice be heard. We are not residents of Galena, nor are those around this site and in Riverton. Thus, we are not and can not vote in any upcoming elections in the City of Galena local politics. This is very much at the heart of this problem. The current system of Island annexation takes our voice and vote away. What is being proposed in this legislation will put it back in. By making an island annexation go through approval by the county commission this will give citizens the ability to hold those accountable for their decision at the next election. Thanks you for taking the time to read this and I pray and will continue to pray that you will make the correct decision and vote to adopt this bill. Also, if Galena City Council passes this annexation before this bill passes, please consider making it retroactive, thus voiding the annexation unless it is approved by the county commissioners.

Sincerely,  
Matthew Feldkamp  
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