Donna Martin

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Dexter, Kansas 67038

February 9, 2015

Chairman Rep. Steve Heubert

149B-S Kansas State Capitol

300 10th Avenue

Topeka, KS 66612

RE: HB 2238, Cowley County: The Stone Bridge Capital of Kansas

To whom it may Concern:

I am Donna Martin. Cowley County has been my home for 71 years and I still own and personally operate a Cattle Ranch on Grouse Creek land near Dexter. My family came to Cowley before settlement and has lived here since the 1800s. I have an avid interest in area history and am regarded in my community and family as knowledgeable.

How Knowledgeable:

1. The adjacent land owners of over 75% of the bridges are either my friends or relatives.
2. I have researched all of the bridges in Eastern Cowley and know many stories about them I spoke at a Flint Hills Heritage conference several years ago in Cottonwood Falls regarding Cowley's Treasured Bridges.
3. I have lead 5 touring bus groups as well as other groups interested in these Century Bridge. Two months ago a busload of 46 people came from Topeka and we toured one of the bridges and talked about others.
4. Because I have helped gather cattle on horseback, I am aware of additional stone arch bridges in surrounding pastures that are not on public right-of-ways.
5. I work with the Cowley County Tourism Alliance in acceptable ways of sharing these historic, hundred year old bridges with tourists. Since viewing the bridges from on top of the bridge is almost impossible, I insisted that property owners and residents of adjacent lands be actively respected and the County Commission responded by clearing and improving viewing areas that are on public right of way. Other issues are being addressed to continue mutual respect and communication between landowners, tourists and tour leaders.

Please support HB 2238 because it can bring additional tourism to our rural area. Since we have been losing population at a rate of about 24% in the last ten years, Economic Development in our area is vital. Recognizing our assets and utilizing them in acceptable ways is the very best way to go.