



Senate Natural Resources Committee

March 12, 2015

RE: HOUSE BILL No. 2059

Chairman Powell and Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2059.

My name is Richard Wenstrom, and I am a farmer and irrigator from southern Edwards County. I am speaking today, however, as President, Board of Directors, Water Protection Association of Central Kansas (Water PACK). Water PACK is a private non-profit association of about 500 agricultural producers and related agribusinesses organized to be a proactive voice for irrigated agriculture.

Water PACK remains a proponent of HB 2059 to allow Chief Engineer to order Augmentation of Water as an option in the settlement of impairment issues. If the Committee chooses to add the amendment contained in the Senate Bill 52 ("such replacement is available and offered voluntarily"), Water PACK would be in support of that amendment. Although Water PACK supports the use of this Augmentation Bill in the Rattlesnake Creek Sub-Basin because of the ongoing Quivira National Wildlife Refuge impairment investigation conducted by the Chief Engineer and his staff, we would not object to the applicability of HB 2059 to the entire state of Kansas, provided the above amendment was added by this Committee.

Our irrigated producer members upstream of the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge stand to be negatively impacted should impairment be found and the only solution that the Chief Engineer currently has is water rights administration. Producers in our area pay an additional \$ 3.2 million in property real estate taxes each year over and above those taxes paid on dryland acres. These same producers spend \$ 262 million each year in our local communities on inputs and produce revenue exceeding \$ 400 million annually. In addition there is \$ 789 million market value of livestock in the area. Irrigation is critically important to our communities and to the state of Kansas.

Water PACK and our irrigator producer members respectfully ask that HB 2059 be acted upon favorably by this Committee to give the Chief Engineer more options in water impairment issues. Time is of the essence for us.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and I would be pleased to answer questions at an appropriate time.