GOVERNOR'S MILITARY COUNCIL

Testimony in Opposition of SB 425
Senate Standing Committee on Natural Resources
February 18, 2016

Chairman Powell and members of the Committee, I'm John Armbrust, Executive Director of the Governor's Military Council. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 425, which relates to conservation easements.

In today's environment of defense budget and personnel reductions and the possibility of a future round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) being authorized in the next several years, it is important for the State of Kansas to take all prudent actions possible to demonstrate Kansas is a military friendly state. This is especially true given the fiscal and economic impact of military activities in Kansas.

A study conducted by Wichita State University, which I recently updated, concluded that: military activities in Kansas add approximately $7.0B per year to the state's Gross State Product; over 160,000 people are employed as a result of these military activities and their wages total over $5.0B per year; and, military activities in Kansas generate approximately $350M per year in property, sales and income taxes.

It is in the light of significant DoD downsizing, a possible BRAC, and a significant fiscal and economic factor in our State being at risk that I assess the impact of SB 425. As one looks at the criteria used by the Department of Defense in assessing which installations to downsize or close, the key criteria revolve around military value. Instrumental in determining military value is the lack of encroachment both today and in the future.

One of the ways we in Kansas have approached this encroachment challenge is through the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program. It is through ACUB that permanent Conservation Easements are acquired through which financial protection is provided to WILLING/VOLUNTEER, participating landowners. I want to reemphasize, this program is one for WILLING/VOLUNTEER participating landowners.

Passage of SB 425 puts our military installations needlessly at risk by eliminating the military's best option for sustaining the capabilities of our nation's installations through mutually beneficial, volunteer partnerships with its neighboring willing landowners.

It is for these reasons I recommend this Committee oppose SB 425.

Respectfully,

John Armbrust