

Testimony against **SB425-Authorizing board of county commissioners of any county to regulate conservation easements on property within the county**

I wish to voice my strong opposition to **SB425**. My belief as a Republican has always been that my party opposes interference of the government into personal and property rights, but obviously I am wrong, for this legislation, if enacted, would take away the rights of any Kansas landowner to place his or her property into a perpetual conservation easement.

My roots in Kanas go back to the 1870s when my great-grandparents came from Ohio to settle on 80 acres near Sycamore Springs in northeastern Butler County. Over the years my grandparents, my parents, and my wife and I have multiplied those acres nearly ten-fold. In 2007 we, with the approval and encouragement of our children, donated our family ranch into a perpetual conservation easement with Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK).

Why? Because we want our Flint Hills pastureland to remain grass forever, to look as nearly as possible two hundred years from now as it did well over a century ago when William and Mary Ann Hoy first arrived on the Kansas plains. We consider this easement both a tribute to our ancestors and a gift to future generations of Kansans, not just our descendants, to preserve the tallgrass prairie of the Flint Hills, to protect it from fragmentation and commercialization.

Today, just as before the easement, we operate our ranch as a ranch with no interference from RTK, we continue to pay full property taxes on this land (as will any future owners), we can sell it, or (as is our intention) our children will inherit it.

Today, the grass on our ranch is just as green, it waves just as freely in the wind, the cattle grazing on it are just as fat, the prairie chickens and badgers are just as free as before it was placed in a perpetual conservation easement, and I rest easy knowing that it will remain that way forever. I urge that this bill be defeated.

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