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LEGISLATURE *of* THE STATE *of* KANSAS
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MEMORANDUM

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

From: The Office of Revisor of Statutes

Date: 03/04/2025

Re: S.B. 36; Increasing the cap on the amount of moneys disbursed by the division of conservation to conservation districts and providing an increased matching basis for state moneys disbursed to conservation districts based on amounts allocated by the board of county commissioners for such districts.

S.B. 36 would amend the state funding requirements¹ for conservation districts² in the following ways:

- The deadline for districts to submit certification of county funding would be changed from September 1 to November 1 of each calendar year;
- the \$25,000 per district appropriation limit would be increased to \$50,000, subject to appropriations; and
- such state appropriations would now be disbursed to each district on a 2:1 matching basis, not to exceed \$50,000.

S.B. 36 would become effective upon publication in the statute book.

¹ Under current law, conservation districts are funded in the following manner:

• County Funding (K.S.A. 2-1907b): The board of county commissioners, upon request of the board of supervisors of the conservation district, may pay to the district moneys from the county general fund for the supervisor to carry out their duties. In addition to moneys from the county general fund, the board of county commissioners may levy an annual tax against the taxable tangible property within the district, not to exceed 2 mills or \$55,000 whichever is less.

• State Funding (K.S.A. 2-1907c): On or before September 1 of each year, each conservation district submits to the division of conservation established within the Kansas department of agriculture a certification of the amount of money the district will receive from the county for the next year. The division then includes a line item in its regular budget request for an amount equal to the sum of the allocations of each county to each district, not to exceed \$25,000 per district. After July 1 of the following year, the division disburses that appropriated money to each district on a 1:1 matching basis with the county funding or, if appropriations are insufficient, on a prorated basis.

² “Severe soil erosion problems during the Dust Bowl period of the 1930s prompted the passage of the Conservation District Law in 1937, KSA §§ 2-1901 et seq., and a subsequent amendment on July 1, 2007. The first conservation district was created in Labette County in 1938 and the last was in Shawnee County in 1954, for a total of 105 conservation districts across the state, one in each county. In recognition that the farm and grazing lands of the state are among its basic assets and must be protected and promoted, the purpose of the Conservation District Law was and is to address improper land-use practices that cause and contribute to the serious erosion of farm and grazing lands within the state. Soil erosion in the 1930s resulted in the loss of fertile soil material in dust storms, the reduction in productivity of rich bottom lands, and the deterioration of Kansas crops.” Conservation Districts, Kansas Legislative Research Department (Sept. 18, 2018), https://www.kslegresearch.org/KLRD-web/Publications/AgNatlResources/Water_Resources/ConservationDistricts.pdf