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Testimony in Support of SB 65 House Committee on Elections February 26, 2026

Chair Proctor, Vice Chair Waggoner, Ranking Minority Member Haskins, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District No. 2 (“KBID”) in North Central Kansas, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 65, which has already passed the Kansas Senate. KBID requested this legislation after discovering that K.S.A. 42-706, the statute governing elections for KBID’s board of directors, contains internal conflicts and does not provide clear, workable election guidance.

This election statute applies only to irrigation districts constructed under contracts with the United States Bureau of Reclamation, and there are only a handful in Kansas. KBID is the largest, organized in 1948 to deliver irrigation water to approximately 42,500 acres in Republic and Jewell Counties.

The issues in K.S.A. 42-706 largely stem from amendments made in 2015 as part of the legislative package moving local elections from spring to fall, which left the statute inconsistent and confusing (including conflicting directions on election timing and director terms).

For many years, KBID has operated with a three-member board, with one director elected each year. Since 2009, KBID has successfully conducted elections using a mail ballot process pursuant to a detailed written election plan. However, the current form of the statute is unclear as to whether KBID’s mail ballot election process, or any workable election process, can continue.

SB 65 fixes these statutory problems and provides clear authority for KBID to continue using a mail ballot election process that is efficient and cost-effective for a district of KBID’s size. Importantly, the version now before the House also includes changes proposed by the Secretary of State’s Office to strengthen administration by: increasing county election officer involvement in the mail-ballot process; and requiring a formal mail-ballot election plan to be filed with the Secretary of State, so there is a clear, standardized framework and accountability for these elections.

Because this statute applies only to a very small number of Bureau-of-Reclamation irrigation districts, SB 65 is narrowly targeted and should have little to no effect on other irrigation districts

THOMPSON LAW, P.A.

Testimony in Support of SB 65

February 26, 2025

Page 2

that use different election procedures.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the House Committee on Elections recommend SB 65 for passage.

Respectfully submitted,

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