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**Written Testimony of Mark Schreiber
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On Senate Substitute HB 2149
Before the House Appropriations Committee
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The electric utility industry currently faces many challenges from an aging workforce, multiple new environmental control regulations, and a need to update and expand our transmission system. Engineers will be needed to overcome these challenges and form a 21st century utility. Approximately 10% of our workforce is composed of engineers, many of whom are graduates of our engineering universities, Wichita State University, the University of Kansas and Kansas State University. We like to hire graduates from these institutions because they understand the culture of Kansas.

Every year, we offer internships to about 20 engineering students in the hope we can attract them when they begin looking for a job after graduation. Our engineers can work in a variety of areas: plant operations and support, transmission, substations, emission controls and software. Kansas engineering graduates are important to our success.

Westar Energy has embarked on the largest capital expenditure program in its history. We plan to build new transmission from western Kansas to the Wichita area. Our power plants need to be retrofitted to meet new environmental regulations over the next five years. And on top of all this, over 50% of our workforce is 50 years or older, and many of them have 20 years or more experience at Westar.

Senate Sub for HB 2149 creates a program that partners the state engineering institutions with businesses to expand the availability of engineering graduates in Kansas. It leverages state money with a dollar for dollar match from private business. The money will be used to upgrade engineering facilities at the universities to educate more engineering students, who will be employed in Kansas. Westar is committed to this program and would encourage the committee's support.