

Kansas Farm Bureau
Policy Statement

Senate Agriculture Committee

HB 2516; An act concerning water

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Submitted by:

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Chairman Taddiken and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2516 as it relates to the Kansas Water Banking Act. I am Kent Askren, Assistant Director of Natural Resources for the Kansas Farm Bureau. As written, KFB stands in support of HB 2516.

Our members have adopted policy supportive of water banking. To date, water banking has not been heavily utilized but even as we discuss this topic meetings are being held between parties of the Rattlesnake Creek Partnership regarding past and future efforts to curtail water usage in the Rattlesnake Creek basin.

Water Banking is a valuable component in the suite of options to help bring water usage down in the Rattlesnake Creek drainage basin. Without tools like water banking, the probability of water conflicts will increase while production and revenues will suffer.

But water banking can be more than just a conservation tool. Many other western states utilize water banking to get the most value out of a finite resource. Water banking can be used to help facilitate the transfer of developed water to new uses which will be good for Kansas as the state advances to becoming fully developed.

I had the privilege of serving on the first team to evaluate the only water bank in Kansas, the Central Kansas Water Bank Association. I must admit many on the team, including me, were skeptical of how the bank had performed. But following a thorough review of the statute, regulations and the charter, the team concluded water banking does have a role to play and with some improvements, water banking could be successful in Kansas. The proposals in HB 2516 reflect some of the initial steps needed to improve the program.

As Kansas water law further matures and our water resources advance towards full development, it will take forward thinking concepts like water banking to maximize production without further jeopardizing our water resources.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony, I would be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.