

***Kansas Farm Bureau  
Policy Statement***

**House Committee on Judiciary  
HB 2113; Relating to judges; authority of Supreme Court.**

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Written Testimony by:  
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Chairman Kinzer and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 2113 relating to the shift of allocating judicial resources to the Supreme Court. I am Michael Irvin, Legislative Counsel - Governmental Relations for the Kansas Farm Bureau.

Kansas Farm Bureau opposes HB 2113. Our members have adopted policy, which strongly supports the requirement that there be at least one judge in each county.

As you know KFB is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 40,000 farm and ranch families through 105 county Farm Bureau Associations. Our members farm, ranch, and make their homes in communities across the state. They benefit each day from the existence of a judicial system that treats each one of them equally, whether they are from St. Francis, Elkhart or Wichita.

This measure would allow both district judges and magistrate judges to be removed from their current assignments and reassigned to locations where caseloads are higher. Further, it would allow for a transfer of legislative authority to the judicial branch, without the usual checks and balances.

We understand the need for judicial economy, and are willing to explore all the alternatives (i.e. case management system). But, our members simply do not wish to bear this burden disproportionately just because many of them live in a less populous area. In essence, there needs to be a balance between the requirements for rural communities and the demands of larger populous. This can only be accomplished with the oversight of the legislature.

For many of our members, judges in less populated communities play vital roles as community leaders and provide critical and timely service to local law enforcement. Their presence ensures access to the judicial system and facilitates compliance with Kansas law requiring timely hearings for any number of legal issues. They also provide jobs and contribute to the economies of struggling rural communities.

Passage of these measures will only create more barriers for our members. Some of these obstacles are: lack of equal access to the judicial system especially in an emergency, potential for further travel, cost of litigation and/or technology to participate. While technology could overcome some of these hurdles, there are no assurance given to the rural communities that a system will be provided or function adequately to meet their needs

Even the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission revealed the rural communities have opposition to any change in the one judge per county rule. It also demonstrated concern for the transformation in the current judicial structure that could eventually lead to consolidation. Some even compared losing judges to losing schools.

We appreciate the opportunity to present these comments today. KFB stands ready to assist this committee to ensure that all Kansans have the opportunity to have their concerns addressed by our judicial system.

Thank you.