



To: Kansas Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation

From: David Martin, City Manager, City of Fort Scott

Date: March 14, 2013

RE: Senate Bill No. 231

The City of Fort Scott appreciates the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill No. 231, which would expand the number of counties eligible to participate in the Rural Opportunity Zones Program.

The Rural Opportunity Zones Program would be a great enhancement to the City of Fort Scott. The program would allow us to more effectively recruit families to our town. This issue is especially important to Fort Scott as our population has slowly and steadily declined since 1990. Perhaps more importantly, our civilian labor force has been in decline since 2006.

Workforce has become the number one issue for the economic development of Fort Scott over the last several years. In the last year alone, employers in Fort Scott have added more than 150 jobs to the local economy, pushing the limits of our declining population and labor force numbers. Our city has reached the point where finding qualified employees for the high skill jobs that are currently available has become extremely difficult. It is, therefore, necessary to the economic health of Fort Scott that we recruit new families and new workers to our town.

The Rural Opportunity Zones Program is one, highly important, piece of the recruitment puzzle. With this program, Fort Scott would be able to offer, not only its own assets and amenities, but also a tangible monetary benefit to families who relocate. This ability to offer a concrete benefit in addition to the more subjective benefits of rural, small town living would give the City of Fort Scott and our employers a necessary extra boost in recruitment of new families and workers. The regional and national interest generated by the program would also allow our rural area to reach a broader population from which to attract new residents.

Without the Rural Opportunity Zones Program, Fort Scott will face a nearly insurmountable battle for new residents. Employers who then cannot find qualified new hires will be forced to vacate the region. This program is essential to the continued health and longevity of both Fort Scott and the Southeast Kansas region as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of our interest.

SN Assmnt & Tax

3/18/13

Attach't # 10