

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 215

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members for demonstrating the foresight to seek local input on Senate Bill 215. Not only does this bill have a direct economic impact on our specific area of the state, I believe it has a potential economic impact on the state as a whole.

### Brief History:

The City of Galena was blessed early in its history as a boom town thanks to the discovery of lead and zinc. Along with this discovery, the need for a refining center to process the ore was created, and Eagle Picher built the largest lead and zinc smelter in the world within the city limits of Galena. Galena prospered for many years because of the jobs created by the mines and resulting milling and smelting operations. Galena skated through the great depression without substantial job loss, defying the horrors created nationwide by the economic collapse. Things rolled along for another 20 years post depression, then one by one, mines started closing. As one mine would close, it became more difficult for neighboring mines to keep water pumped out, causing a domino effect on the entire field. Miners and mill workers were forced to relocate, and our city of nearly 15,000 was eventually diminished to just over 3,000.

Downtown payday scenes that rivaled New Orleans Mardi Gras was replaced by collapsing buildings and nearly vacant streets. By the late 1980's to early 1990's, downtown Galena was down to two small businesses, and hardly enough business to support them. There was even talk by some of a federal buyout seen by some neighboring cities as they raised the white flag, finally succumbing to decay and depression.

Fortunately, there was a remnant of people that believed in the viability of our city. The school board persisted through extreme poverty to improve our schools. The Galena Volunteer Fire department pressed on with a program to serve our area with excellence. A spark of life in a very depressing situation!

I became involved in Galena politics in 1993, and began the task of assessing what we could do to improve the lot of what was left of our city. After making a list of city needs, then the task of team building had to begin. This was difficult beyond any words I can describe. Resistance to change, cleaning up corruption, power struggles. In short, we had virtually every problem that could cause failure you could think of. Add to that severe environmental issues (Galena had the title of the most polluted city in the State of Kansas), sinkholes, open mine shafts..... Well, the situation was extremely difficult to say the least. Our team persisted. All this change was so difficult on our residents that we

changed forms of government two times. That means that I have been Mayor under a total of three forms of government, been thrown out of office twice due to those changes, but we still had this solid core of people that believed in Galena.

How times have changed! We now have a thriving medical campus, a City owned Hospital, and we are 50% through a downtown restoration project. Galena is becoming a destination for international travelers touring the famous Route 66. Also, Galena is hosting a number of paranormal tour groups looking for paranormal activity at the famous murderous brothel. We have been featured on the Discovery Channel and other specials are in the works. Last weekend, we had visitors from several states as well as producers from the Discovery Channel. We are now number one in economic development, we continue to look for ways to improve not only our economy, but the economy of the entire area.

Now, to Senate Bill 215. I am neither a gaming advocate or enthusiast. I am, however, an unapologetic economic development machine. I love freedom, I cherish liberty, and I strive for the prosperity for our community, our region, and our state. These goals are simply not possible without comprehensive economic development. My question is simply put. Why would we not do everything we possibly can that would not only allow, but encourage development of a Kansas

facility? The painstaking task of public hearings, campaigns, and finally receiving the vote of the people to allow a casino to operated in southeast Kansas has been done. The people have spoken, and we have an obligation to finish the work that has been started. I believe its high time that the state of Kansas take actions to preserve the economic growth of our state. While each district in the State of Kansas may not be able to see a direct benefit from developments of this type, each Senator and Representative would do well to remember that when the State prospers, every district, every township, and every ward benefits. For the sake of freedom, liberty, and prosperity, I would appreciate your support of Senate Bill 215.

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City of Galena, Kansas