



PROTECT THE PARTNERSHIP

**Testimony of Carol Marinovich, Executive Director
House Appropriations Committee
March 16, 2016**

Good morning Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Carol Marinovich and I am the executive director of Protect the Partnership, a coalition of Wyandotte County voices concerned about proposed changes to the Kansas Expanded Lottery Act and how it will affect our community.

Over 10 years ago, I served as mayor of Kansas City, Kansas and served in that capacity for ten years. The consolidation of our county's and city's government in 1997 was crucial to our future. Since then, we've seen a tremendous amount of economic development, turning the fate of our county around and onto a positive track.

One of the keys to our success has been the development of the Village West area. It began with Kansas Speedway in 2001, followed by Nebraska Furniture Mart, Cabela's, Legends Outlet, a mixed-use retail area, Sporting Soccer Stadium and the Cerner office facility. This area now employs over 8,000 employees and hosts over 10 million annual visitors.

When gaming expansion in the state was approved by the legislature in 2007, we embraced the new economic opportunity it would bring – both at the Woodlands Racetrack as well as with the destination casino assigned to our region. However, as a community, we supported the gaming bill in the form in which it was passed and did not envision operators changing the rules as they went – especially rules that would cost our community important revenues.

In its competitive bid for the destination casino license, Hollywood Casino committed additional revenues to our community. Today, those revenues amount to roughly \$4 million a year. These dollars go to organizations such as the Bonner Springs Edwardsville Education Foundation, the Boy Scouts, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, the Argentine Betterment Corporation, Oakridge Youth Development Corporation, Concerned Citizens for Old Quindaro, and so many more important community organizations throughout Wyandotte County. A half a million dollars a year go to the non-host school districts. Dollars are contributed to Wyandotte County's parks and recreation department. The list goes on.

We had a vision in Wyandotte County and that vision continues today. Economic development was and remains essential to our future and that economic development also called for our business partners to support and invest in our community beyond their four walls or property lines. This has been a successful model with so many of our businesses giving back to our community – from all that the Speedway has done to the impact of bringing new investors to

the community such as the Cerner campus and the new soccer stadium. Development is a holistic approach that touches on benefiting as many of our citizens as possible. Attracting economic development also means providing a fair, stable and even playing field for those who come to our community. Mr. Ruffin and the racing industry agreed to the 2007 legislation and probably even had a hand in writing it. Showing up in Kansas City nearly seven years later trying to drastically change the rules in his favor is not the kind of economic development policy we support in Wyandotte County. What does that say to the next potential investor? Sorry, our word is worth nothing but please invest anyways?

This is why so many are opposed to changing the rules for the Woodlands. The Bonner Springs/Edwardsville School Board believes that the current law works and should not be changed. Kansas City, Kansas schools, USD 500, are opposed. Kansas business owners, particularly vendors to Hollywood Casino are opposed – they know that the casino has invested in them and will continue to help them build their own businesses. So the question is, why would the legislature choose to change the rules for Wyandotte County with someone who is unwilling to invest in the same way? The new Woodlands owner has come into our community looking for a handout that will not only benefit him greatly but it will be at the expense of our community's and state's dollars. Furthermore, why would anyone in Wyandotte County support racing interests that have never invested in our community?

The development in western Wyandotte County was made possible through strong partnerships between local government, the state of Kansas and the developers. This has proven to be beneficial to all the parties involved. I would hope that that same philosophy would continue, benefitting both the local community and the state.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. We respectfully urge you to oppose HB 2537.