

**Written Testimony of Westar Energy
In Opposition
Before House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
On HB 2299
February 18, 2015**

Chairman Hutton and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding HB 2299.

Although Westar Energy understands that this legislation is a small first step toward establishing a state-administered OSHA program, we have some concerns about the future implementation of such a plan.

As you would expect, the safety of our customers and our employees is top-of-mind for Westar Energy. Our participation in the U.S. Department of Labor's OSHA Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) has helped us realize significant safety improvements at three of our energy centers over the last decade. Our established, effective relationship with the OSHA Region VII office resulted in safety improvements at Jeffrey, Gordon Evans, and Murray Gill Energy Centers, all of which are VPP STAR participants.

In an effort to continually improve upon our safety record, we periodically submit an application to OSHA and undergo rigorous onsite evaluations by a team of safety and health professionals from the Region VII offices. Our experience with the Region VII staff and their VPP audits indicates to us that the federal government is well-equipped with the technical expertise to enforce OSHA standards. They have the knowledge and expertise to continue to oversee safety and health for the state of Kansas without interruption or additional expense to employers or citizens of Kansas.

Another aspect of the VPP program allows Westar to partner with OSHA as it works with other employers striving to become VPP sites or recertifying as VPP sites. A Westar Energy safety employee is assigned as a Special Government Employee with the OSHA Region VII office, helping perform audits and sharing industry best practices. This is yet another example of the successful relationship between OSHA and Westar Energy.

In summary, Westar Energy favors relying on an established federal agency to provide the proven and successful methods that protect the people of Kansas. Our own current safety standards have been positively impacted by the programs of OSHA's Region VII offices. In fact, we were recently named one of the safest companies in America by EHS Today.

The current system is working well for us; it has raised the visibility of our safety programs; and it is keeping Westar Energy customers and employees safe every day.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and for considering our position on HB2299.