



**Testimony of Westar Energy
Laura Maag Lutz, Government Affairs Manager
Opposing SB261
Before Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
March 19, 2015**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding Senate Bill 261. We understand the challenge lawmakers have to manage the state's budget issues. However, we are compelled to advocate on behalf of our more than 600,000 Kansas residential customers who would bear the brunt of a reversal of this tax exemption, which has been in place for a number of years.

Adding a state sales tax to residential energy bills puts more pressure on consumers who are already trying to absorb increasing energy costs. Like the other utilities in Kansas, Westar works diligently to manage electricity costs and offer customers reliable and fairly-priced electricity. However, improvements and enhancements to our transmission and distribution systems, environmental controls added to our power plants, and strengthening Wolf Creek for another 30 years of service are costs that will impact our customers over the next few years.

Placing an additional tax on Kansans' energy bills at this juncture seems a lot to ask of the state's energy consumers, including the nearly 9 percent of our customers who already participate in our bill assistance or payment plan programs.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, we appreciate the opportunity to convey our stance on this legislation, and respectfully ask that you not pass out Senate Bill 261.