

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUPPORTING SENATE BILL 194**

by

Jeff Winter, President

EQUUS BEDS GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT NO. 2

March 5, 2018

Chairman Hoffman and Committee Members, I am Jeff Winter, a life-long Kansas farmer and President of the Equus Beds Groundwater Management District.

My family and I own and operate an irrigation and dryland farming operation in Sedgwick, Harvey, and Reno counties. My family has farmed in the Equus Beds region for decades and I know how important a dependable supply of freshwater is for agriculture and the economy of Kansas. In south-central Kansas, the Equus Beds aquifer is the primary source of water for agriculture.

It was that realization that motivated me to run for a director's position on the Equus Beds Board. Since my election in 2014, I have also discovered that the aquifer has the same importance and economic worth to municipal and industrial users. It was this same realization that motivated local water users and land owners in 1975 to form the Equus Beds Groundwater Management District by way of a special election. It is with this same resolve that I am before you today to support and request that you pass Senate Bill 194 favorably from the committee.

Senate Bill 194 seeks to revise a 16-year old law that caps the groundwater user fee assessed to water permit owners in all five groundwater management districts. The legislation is needed because two of the groundwater management districts, including the Equus Beds District, are currently assessing water users at the maximum allowed by law.

The legislation will provide the Equus Beds District with the financial resources to properly manage and preserve this vital aquifer. The District plays a critical role in providing agricultural producers and other water users information about the aquifer, groundwater availability, proper water well plugging procedures, proper water meter installation, maintenance and repair, water laws and regulations, and water quality data. District staff processes approximately 1,500 to 2,500 customer service requests annually, most of which are from agricultural water users and landowners.

If the legislation is not successful, the Equus Beds District will soon be forced to eliminate a number of groundwater management and monitoring programs, public education activities, and customer services. The elimination of such programs, activities and services will place the aquifer at risk and reduce the amount of information and customer service normally provided to District water users and the public. Additionally, the District's current financial situation based on the current water assessment cap will make it impossible for the District to undertake any additional programs or projects that may be needed for the proper management of the aquifer.

As a farmer I understand that economic conditions are not good at the present time. Any additional expenditure to my operations are reviewed and considered very closely. I have considered, and the Equus Beds Board of Directors has discussed, the need to increase the water assessment cap at great length. It is my belief that Senate Bill 194 is needed, reasonable and prudent to insure that my farming operations, and those of all District members, have a fresh and usable source of groundwater for many years and future generations to come. I urge the Committee to pass Senate Bill 194 favorably.