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HOUSE CHAMBER

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Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank you and the members of your committee for hearing HB 2545. This Bill has basically one purpose, and that is to reopen the horse and dog tracks in Kansas. It is an opportunity to give the stagnant ag economy a shot in the arm, help economic development in four communities, and put needed money in the State Treasury.

My interest in the project stems from being the Representative in the 13th District, which includes Eureka, home of Eureka Downs. Operated by the Greenwood County Fair Association Eureka Downs was the first pari-mutuel wagering in 1986 and supporters of the Greenwood County Fair Association immediately went to work, first securing the finances and then the building an excellent facility with contract laborers and local volunteers. Labor Day weekend of 1986, the track opened. At that time, pari-mutuel racing was new to the Midwest and when legislature set taxing fees, they basically pulled numbers out of thin air. The high fees made it impossible for Eureka Downs to run profitably due to the thinly populated area in which the downs was located. Changes were made in state law to provide a county fair fund, gathered from the larger horse and dog tracks. This helped generate money for purses at both Eureka and Anthony Downs. When the larger tracks could not make a go of it, because of the 40% tax, that fund evaporated and the County Fair tracks had to shut down. Anthony Down has since been torn down, but through the perseverance of some very loyal people, Eureka Downs has continued to operate as a training facility for local area horses that primarily race in Oklahoma and Iowa. If this bill passes out and is signed by the governor. Eureka Downs is in good enough shape, that once the County Fair fund money starts to come in the could immediately start holding races.

Our State has four empty facilities that were basically built because of the trust that they had in the State of Kansas to help make them profitable. Reducing the tax and getting them back running will be a win – win for the state of Kansas. Not only will we be generating jobs and selling Ag Products to the horseman and the greyhound people, but we will be providing much needed revenue to the State Treasury. It is my hope and prayer that this bill can be brought to the floor of both houses and passed out cleanly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman


Larry Hibbard, Representative District 13