

STATE OF KANSAS

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Testimony on HB 2650 relating to State Symbols
To
The House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

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HB 2650 seeks to name certain state symbols. The Department is a proponent of the bill. The provisions of the bill would be effective upon publication in the statute book.

The bill proposes designating the state rock as limestone, the state mineral as galena, and the state gemstone as jelinite amber. While the Department does not have an opinion as to the specific symbols named in the bill, the Department does support the concept of having state symbols that it can use to promote the state and localities within the state where these state symbols reside. Some of our current state symbols include the amphibian: Barred Tiger Salamander; bird: Western Meadowlark; flower: Wild Sunflower; insect: Western Honey Bee; mammal: American Bison; reptile: Ornate Box Turtle; grass: Little Bluestem; and tree: Plains Cottonwood.

The Department would, however, recommend that should this bill move forward, that an amendment be made designating the channel catfish as the state fish. The channel catfish would be rather fitting for the state for many reasons. First and foremost, Kansas is one of only 4 states without a state fish. The channel catfish can be found in almost every body of water in Kansas, from small streams to large rivers, small ponds and large reservoirs and for many young anglers, it was their first fish that they caught. It is a very popular fish for anglers, with over 187,000 Kansas anglers fishing for channel catfish every year. The Kansas state record channel catfish was caught in 2003 in Cherokee County, Kansas. It was 38 inches long and weighed 36.5 pounds. But most importantly, in 1922, Kansas native Seth Way successfully spawned channel catfish for the first time in the world. This method is now used worldwide even today. Mr. Way managed the KDWPT hatchery in Pratt for almost 40 years.

State symbols represent the magnificence of the great state in which we live and show others what we have to offer. It is unlikely that many residing outside of Kansas know the rich history of the symbols of our state and this bill is a step to increasing visitation and awareness of Kansas.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to address the Committee on the bill.