

Testimony for Bill #307

Tuesday February 6, 2018

Bill #307

Ellen P. Pratt, Secretary for Sheridan County Amusement Company, Inc.

Representing: Dighton, Oakley, St. Francis, Goodland, Tribune, Oberlin, Sharon Springs, Weskan, Leoti, Minneapolis, Colby, Norton, LaCrosse and Hoxie.

We Support Bill #307

Good Morning – my name is Ellen P. Pratt and I am a representative for all of the “Home-owned” carnivals in Northwest Kansas. Home-owned carnivals in Northwest Kansas came about because year after year traveling carnivals failed to show for our county fairs. These Home-owned carnivals began in the 1970’s and have been operating ever since. Through the years we have purchased and refurbished rides, some even have homemade rides. We have come up with ideas for homemade games to have for our carnivals for the people of our county and neighboring counties to enjoy. We are all volunteers who take great pride in what we have accomplished. We operate anywhere from 3-7 nights per year during our county fairs, which is approximately 15-40 hours a year, unlike large amusement parks that operate many months or all year long. Our carnivals are run by volunteers from our communities. Hundreds of volunteers are needed yearly for each night of operation. For Sheridan County, it takes approximately 600 volunteers to operate and work the rides, games and concessions for three nights. These are volunteers who donate their time and receive no pay—because they are proud to be a part of their local carnival.

Our number one priority is to be SAFE!!! Our own children, grandchildren, friends and their families are riding these rides, playing the games and enjoying everything we have to offer. We have taken it upon ourselves to have our rides inspected for many years. This year, the Sheridan County carnival had both inspections done which the new bill requires. Both inspections plus having to hire a ASWD1.1 certified structural welder, which was required by the inspection company, cost us about \$8,000.00. We agree we need these inspections and repairs because we want everything to be safe, but also know we have trained our extremely competent volunteers to maintain and operate our rides, and they are just as concerned about the safety of our rides as our board members.

We all carry insurance that in 2017 cost us anywhere from \$5,000.00 - \$20,000.00. Even with our all-volunteer workers, the increased cost of insurance will be a difficult financial burden.

Our county fairs and carnivals have become “reunion time,” the time when families with faraway members come home for reunions. High School class reunions are held at this time because they can get away easier in the summer than during the school year when their children are involved in their own school activities. Family vacations are planned during the fair because it is a time to

see family and come to the carnival for a fun time that is affordable. Most tickets only cost .50 cents each and most rides are only two tickets. This time of year is a big boost to our local economy as hotels are full, restaurants are busy and local businesses benefit also as evidenced by a recent study conducted by the Decatur County Carnival Board:

Impacts of the 2017 Decatur County Fair

Attendance and Geographical Reach

Friday Night

- Friday, which included the Demolition Derby, was the busiest night.
- Cards thanking people for coming were placed on vehicle windshields in the parking lot.
- 500 cards were handed out, and there was still a significant number of vehicles that didn't receive a card.
- Assuming 3 people per vehicle, 600 vehicles would equate to 1,800 visitors.
- 1,800 people is approximately equal to the entire population of Oberlin.

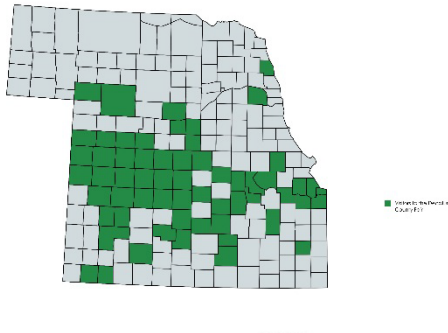
Saturday Night

- Several volunteers drove through the parking lots and tallied the states as well as the KS and NE counties observed on license plates.
- 28 Kansas counties were tallied.
- 12 Nebraska counties were tallied.
- 16 states were tallied.

Facebook Responses and Local Newspaper

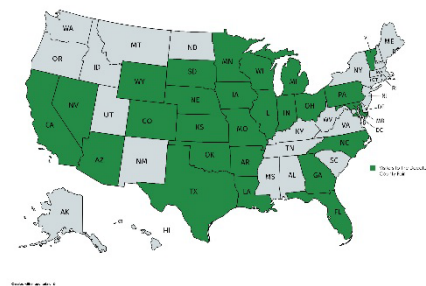
- A Facebook post in a community page asked people to comment with the states or KS counties that their visitors were from who attended the fair.
- The Oberlin Herald also had lists of some of the fair visitors.
- The Facebook post had approximately 150 responses.
- 1,371 out-of-county attendees were tallied.
- 45 Kansas counties were tallied.
- 26 states were tallied
- It was also noted that people from Ecuador, Germany, and Bolivia visited the Decatur County Fair.

Map of Kansas and Nebraska Counties



- From all sources of attendance count, people from 49 KS counties and 12 NE counties visited our fair.
- Nearly 47% of KS counties had attendees at the Decatur County Fair.

Map of States



- From all sources of attendance count, people from 26 different states visited our fair.
- 52% of U.S. states had attendees at the Decatur County Fair.

All our rides are serviced and maintained by some of the best mechanics, welders, electricians, etc., in the state of Kansas. We keep records and maintenance manuals on all our rides and everything we do, and we have prepared and maintained these records and manuals without the state law requiring us to do so.

We are all real people providing a few nights of good, clean, safe fun for people who appreciate what we do. We each are not big amusement parks that operate all year long. We are not traveling carnivals that bounce up and down the highway from town to town. We are home-owned carnivals with permanent rides, many of which are landscaped with grass and trees, buildings that house our concessions, games and equipment, which are cleaned and inspected each day of operation. We have good volunteers making sure everything is safe and working properly.

We invite you to visit our home-owned carnivals and see firsthand who we are. We are doing what you are asking in this bill – but feel some of your rules and regulations concerning licensing, certification, liability, inspections, insurance, and manuals don't fit who we are: one glove doesn't fit all. We feel that Bill #307 is better for us, a home-owned carnival, and we ask that you consider passage of the bill in light of our concerns.