

WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

House Bill 2385

February 19, 2020

Chairman Barker, Vice-Chairman Awerkamp, Ranking Member Ruiz, and distinguished Committee Members,

We are the president of the Kansas Square Dance Association (KSDA). We appreciate the opportunity to address the consideration being taken to recognize the polka as the official dance of Kansas.

We believe square dancing has a considerable impact in the Kansas dancing arena. We agree with the proposal from Allen Hahn, President of Kansas Square Dance Caller Association, to amend H.B. 2385 to designate Square Dance as the State Folk Dance and to designate Polka as the State Ethnic Dance.

Our association covers all of Kansas with over 450 members and 36 clubs. Our organization is subdivided into two districts; the Blue District; the name was chosen to represent the Kansas sky and the Kansas flag, while the Gold District's name was chosen to represent the ripe wheat and bright fields of sunflowers often seen swaying in the Kansas sunshine.

KSDA holds annual dances and an annual convention; not only do our members attend but also dancers from Nebraska, Missouri, and other states. It is significant to note for 68 years we have had a state square dance convention. For over 40 years this convention has been held in Salina. In 1982 our organization received a Certificate of Appreciation plaque from the Salina Bicentennial Center for holding our annual convention at the center. In 2012, "Visit Salina" announced that the Kansas Square Dance Convention created spending in the community of \$106,775 and in 2018, they estimated a \$101,000 impact. Last year, 2019, our 3-day event registered over 340 dancers; 222 were from Kansas the balance represented other states. Square dancers contribute to the Kansas economy by renting venues, utilizing lodging, frequenting restaurants, and shopping in the dance's community.

On an average our clubs have dances twice a month in their respective towns. They rent locations for their dances and hire callers and cuers for their events. KSDA provides clubs and districts a centrally located way to advertise themselves. Our print form magazine, Travel On is published 4 times a year. It provides club's dance schedules, fliers for special dances and various articles of interest to dancers. We also maintain a website which allows a 24/7 way to communicate announcements or changes. In 1989, KSDA made arrangements for KSDA's historical material and all issues of the Travel On magazine were to go into the Kansas Collection at the University of Kansas. We continue to contribute to this collection.

If you attended the Kansas State Fair on September 9<sup>th</sup>, you may have seen the square dancing that took place at the Capper Building. Square dancers are often invited to participate in community events. We have participated in parades, performed demonstrations for social clubs, schools and retirement centers.

In 2008, KSDA hosted the 57th National Square Dance Convention in Wichita. Over 5,900 dancers attended which included dancers from the U.S. and 9 different countries. It was estimated this event had a \$2.5 million economic impact for Kansas. The National Convention is moved around to different states. Our Kansas dancers are easily recognizable with our sunflower umbrellas when we join in the traditional Parade of States. We thank the Kansas Department of Tourism for providing us with highway maps, pamphlets, and other Kansas literature which we display at our Show Case of Ideas booth at each National Convention.

Heart of America Single Square Dance Association (HASSDA) is a square dance organization which represents single square dancers in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Each year they have a multiday festival in one of the states they represent. In 2013, HASSDA's festival was held in Manhattan; over 360 dancers attended. They returned their festival to Manhattan in 2019 where 435 dancers enjoyed dancing in the ballrooms at K-State. The festival will be held again in Manhattan on July 23, 24, & 25, 2020.

Many of you may have experienced a form of square dancing in PE class or in 4-H, this seems to be a common reply when we ask people if they have ever tried square dancing. It provides many health benefits and is an excellent source of exercise which has been written about in various Health Letters; including the Mayo Clinic's Health Letter. Square dancing has also been used in some companies as a creative way to focus on teambuilding. Unlike other forms of dancing that are done in pairs or as individuals, square dancing involves groups of eight. All eight dancers rely on each other to successfully implement the calls in unison; which is in itself a type of teamwork.

We have a popular slogan in the square dance community, "Square Dancing is Friendship Set to Music." Many who square dance enjoy the opportunity to dance to a variety of music and also have fellowship with great people who value friendships and good conversation. We have been square dancing for over 40 years. We travel to many of the local clubs and festivals; this gives us the opportunity to visit parts of Kansas we may not be very familiar with. We also travel to dances out of state often expanding the trips into vacations. The one thing we have always found; when we enter the square dance hall, the dancers on the other side of the door greet us with a warm welcome. Through square dancing we have met many lasting friends.

Larry & Laurel Erickson  
President, Kansas Square Dance Association  
Manhattan, KS