

Senate Committee on Utilities

Senate Bill 169

Kansas Rural Water Association

Testimony by Doug Mays

February 20, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 169.

The Kansas Rural Water Association has active membership of 265 rural water districts in Kansas, as well as 475 municipalities. The mission of the KRWA is to provide education, technical assistance and leadership to public water and wastewater utilities in order to enhance public health and to sustain Kansas' communities.

Senate Bill 169 is one of several bills introduced this session the purpose of which is to amend various statutes to redirect certain moneys to the Water Program Management Fee Fund as required under KSA 65-166b.

Section 1 of the bill would raise the maximum fee for certification of operators of water supply and wastewater treatment facilities. Currently, individual operator fees cannot exceed \$25. SB 169 would raise the cap to \$125. I would be less than candid if I did not state that there has been some hesitancy regarding the increase.

Presently, many water systems across Kansas that are seeking to hire certified operators are experiencing a dearth of candidates. The origins of this shortage can be attributed to various reasons. One prominent cause, however, is a low passage rate by those taking the certification exam that at this time unnecessarily tests for *both* ground water *and* surface water treatment.

The KRWA has received verbal assurances from KDHE that the exam will be modified accordingly in a timely manner, and that the increased certification fees will be phased in over a period of years. Based on those assurances, the KRWA Board of Directors adopted a resolution continuing the following relevant statement:

The Kansas Rural Water Association:

...supports statutory changes that would allow increases to operator certification fees up to \$125. Provided, that changes be made to the certification exam in order to distinguish between groundwater and surface water treatment and that increases in such fees be gradual.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time