

02/21/2012 Oral Testimony in **opposition of Senate Bill 379** to the Committee on Federal and State Affairs by Justin Johnson

Good morning Chairman Brungardt and Honorable members of the Committee. My name is Justin Johnson owner of Golden Road Estate Vineyard located in Leavenworth County just west of Linwood Kansas. I am here to testify in opposition to SB 379.

History: Born and raised in Missouri - after high school, attended the University of Kansas, only later to become an electrician with a large Lenexa based electrical contractor. Promotion took me to St. Louis, MO and while there, began my interest in wine and grapes.

2008 transferred back to Kansas City area. Passion for wine and grapes had grown – wanted to find location (property) to start a vineyard with the hopes of a winery at some point. I visited wineries on both sides of the state line, asking questions and learning as much as I could about the industry.

I became an **informed consumer** along the way as well – feeling deceived by the Missouri wineries– thinking that I was enjoying (some, not all) Missouri wine from grapes grown in Missouri. Not always the case. A lot of wine made from juice imported from other states – even juice that would be from a grape grown in Missouri was sometimes imported from New York.

Kansas was different – setting its self **above** surrounding states. With 60% Kansas grown fruit, I felt the wineries were truly making Kansas wine as well as supporting local agriculture and all the trickle down businesses therein. They were not deceiving the consumer who wished to purchase local grown nor the tourist who truly wanted a Kansas wine – wines that have won numerous medals.

Final questions asked: Ultimate goal is to open a winery in 5 to 10 years so.....

- What happens if my crop is hit with late frost, 2-4-D or pest infestation?
 - Informed by Kansas wineries that you can get a variance to import if needed – since have learned that **NONE** have been denied.
- If, for some odd reason, I want to make wine from a grape that cannot withstand the climate in Kansas?
 - I can get a **Kansas Manufacture's** license (Winery can hold both licenses).

October 2009 – bought property in Leavenworth County (dismay from my uncles who farm other crops in Missouri)

April 2011 – planted 2 acres of different varieties to see which ones create unique flavors from my Kansas land.

If the 60% removed from law - not sure I will continue to exist as a vineyard and open a winery, as some capital is to come from the first few years of harvest and selling to current wineries.

If "Production" definition left, would allow finished wine from anywhere to be imported into Kansas and bottled at a Kansas Winery – HUGE deception to any consumer!

In 2014, the year of my 1st harvest, I currently have a market for my grapes (winery already interested) – I sincerely feel that if SB 379 is enacted, the possibility of this is drastically reduced.

Thank you,
Justin Johnson
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