



KANSAS FARM BUREAU

The Voice of Agriculture

TO: Chairwoman Schwartz
Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

FROM: Stacey Forshee
Kansas Farm Bureau Board Member

DATE: March 20, 2013

RE: Written Testimony
HB 2404; Kansas Agricultural Growth and Rural Investment Initiative

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to join you today to talk about the future of agriculture in Kansas. My name is Stacey Forshee and my husband David and I, along with our three children, farm and ranch in rural Cloud county. As you might expect, this is the time of year when our first year heifers are nearly done calving and we take a breath before the older cows begin. That process and our family are what motivate me to join you today, to talk about ensuring opportunity for my kids and creating diversification and certainty within the agricultural economy in Kansas.

I have the extreme privilege of serving as a member of the state board of directors for Kansas Farm Bureau. As you know KFB represents farmers and ranchers in each of the state's 105 counties. Our membership totals just over 106,000 making us the largest general farm organization in Kansas. We're pleased to offer our support for SB 191 today.

This decision is not one that our board took lightly. Balancing the options for local control and input with the needs of a growth oriented industry and struggling rural economies was a thought provoking process. However, our decision to support this effort was unanimous and was broadly based on the following principles:

Free Market Economies

As you are aware one of the reasons to repeal the existing law is based on the legal theory that differentiating between business entity types violates the Dormant Commerce Clause and is unconstitutional. Our attorneys have reviewed the case law and agree that this is the likely outcome were Kansas law to be challenged. But that potential ruling is not the basis for our decision.

In today's global economy Kansas will continue to struggle if we as a state fail to embrace concepts of free and open markets. This is a concept our members and our policy have long supported. It's one that David and I attempt to embrace every day on our farm by looking for new opportunities for our hay, grain or cattle.

This change in the law will open our state to new development by removing barriers to entering, or in some cases remaining in business in Kansas. It will allow multi-generation

family operations to continue to work in Kansas instead of imposing a system on them where future generations may be ineligible to own or operate the farm or ranch because of their removed status in comparison to the original owners of the enterprise.

As farmers and ranchers we are constantly concerned about the next generation of producers. We want to do everything possible to encourage them to stay on the farm without a challenge from this outdated statute.

Growth Potential for Agriculture and Rural Communities

You'll likely hear the Secretary of Agriculture talk about the impressive growth potential for agriculture in Kansas following the repeal of this law. That translates to real dollar benefits for farm and ranch families like mine all across the state.

New investment and expansion of processing in Kansas will create new opportunities for producers like us through additional markets for grain, resulting in higher prices; or through processing facilities that are closer and lower transportation costs – putting more dollars in the hands and wallets of producers who will buy pickups and groceries in our rural communities.

Any expansion of the industry will also create new jobs and provide diversification for the economies of our rural communities, supporting main street businesses, schools and the other small town amenities many of us hold dear.

Continuing to Protect the Environment

We all realize that farmers and ranchers are committed to a healthy environment that will sustain our operations and provide for future generations. For that reason we will continue to strongly support the existing structure for permitting and inspecting ponds and other structures which insure and protect our water resources.

We also support the notification and comment periods that these laws contain as they provide concerned neighbors and the public at large with an opportunity to raise issues and to impact the process of siting a facility

Conclusion

Finally, Madam Chair, Kansas Farm Bureau believes that we simply cannot sit back and maintain the status quo. Doing so will only support the decline of our industry and our communities.

My children want to come back to the farm. David and I are unsure how we will, or if we can accommodate that desire based on our current configuration. This effort could provide us with the additional avenues and higher prices that can make that dream a reality.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Kansas Farm Bureau represents grassroots agriculture. Established in 1919, this non-profit advocacy organization supports farm families who earn their living in a changing industry.