

Testimony of Thad Holcombe: Opponent to SB 405

Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

If I were to be present and able to speak with you who are making a decision on Senate Bill 405, I would share with you what I have learned as the Convener of the Water Advocacy Team-Douglas County. We began coming together last summer to educate and advocate for sustainable water in Kansas. We began meeting because there is a water crisis in Kansas. It is reflected in the depletion of the acquirers, contamination of the rivers/lakes, sedimentation of our lakes, exponential growth of algae - the list goes on. We have had six meetings over a period of seven months. We have had 212 individuals register as wanting to address this crisis. They are a diverse population. They are young adult to elderly. They are Republican and Democrats. They have traveled to our meetings in Lawrence from Tonganoxie, Eudora, Baldwin City, Linwood and other smaller communities - some are folks who live in more rural areas.

Why do all these folk take the time and effort, some driving over thirty miles, to come to a WAT meeting to address the water crisis? Yes, we had one meeting that specifically addressed the problem that had arisen in the attempt by Tyson to come to the region around Tonganoxie, but they continued to come for other related topics. **What motivates them is a desire to be engaged as citizens and have a voice on matters that affect their lives! They want to have their elected officials at the city, county, state levels represent them and hear their voice. They want to know they can trust these folk to listen. They are not expecting for unanimous agreement. They are expecting and wanting elected officials to insure and promote the public good and not a "good" for any particular vested interest. This applies to those who initiate growing of large quantities of chickens.** It applies to a Kansas Corporation Commission, which recently seems to be more interested in promoting the producers instead of acting in best interests of the "public", as stated in their official purpose. **They want to have recognition by their elected officials that there is a crisis in this state related to care of the earth and to a government which seemingly avoids or denies that Kansas has a governmental problem. That problem seems to be growing.** For many who participate in WAT, elected officials do not seem to be listening. There is a feeling that elected officials are not respecting the citizens of the state in facilitating their having a voice in their future. They are motivated to come to WAT meetings hoping that they can have a more responsive government represent them! And, when that occurs, they are very appreciative.

SB 405 perpetuates what frustrates these citizens. It promotes a lack of transparency and it patronizes the very citizens who are going to be affected by any decision to promote huge chicken houses. The citizens have a right to be involved in such a decision. They have a right to be heard, otherwise the growing pessimism regarding how they often view government becomes an angry cynicism.

My hope is that SB 405 will be amended to reflect the yearnings of folks who are engaged in WAT. If that is not possible, please consider abandoning this legislation.

Thad Holcombe
Convener of Water Advocacy Team - [Douglas County](#)
[1817 Learnard Avenue](#)
[Lawrence, KS 66044](#)
Telephone: [785-843-2574](#)
Email: tjholcombe@gmail.com