



KANSAS RURAL CENTER

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Senate Agriculture Committee

Testimony of the Kansas Rural Center On SB 405

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The Kansas Rural Center stands in opposition to SB 405.

This move by the poultry industry to reduce the animal conversion rate for animal waste so as to allow larger numbers of broilers or laying hens at a single location flies in the face of private property rights and the quality of life so many of us enjoy in rural Kansas. The issue is the set back distances required based on the number of animal units.

Current law at the wet litter rate of .01 per chicken requires a set back distance of 1320 feet for 300 to 999 animal units. This translates into 30,000 to 100,000 chickens or 3 to 4 barns. This would seem to be enough to be concerned about, but under the proposed change to .003 per chicken under dry litter, neighbors within 1320 feet could be subjected to three times as many chickens (300,000 in multiple barns) at a single location – without any legal option to oppose or question this industrial operation moving into their neighborhood.

The bill is clearly intended to make it easier for large concentrations of poultry barns to locate here without consideration of the impact on quality of life, water and air quality, or general public health. While Kansas State University Extension experts claim no odor and no pollution potential, we ask whether members of this committee would like to risk having one of these concentrated poultry operations move into their neighborhoods?

Furthermore, the poultry industry is being touted as an economic boon for farmers in Kansas—as a way to add an easy enterprise, bring a son or daughter into the family business, or an opportunity for a beginning farmer. We suggest you ask the thousands of poultry contract growers across the south and southeast United States—70 percent of whom have poverty level incomes—whether this has been their economic salvation? The litany of woes of contract poultry growers in the south and southeast should stand as a warning to farmers in Kansas, something the experts who testified on the wonders of modern poultry production have not mentioned. The farm economy is vulnerable enough, without increasing debt and risk to the state’s farmers.

Kansas currently does not have a poultry processing facility in need of these changes. We urge this committee to do its research and homework on the current status of contract poultry producers in other states, examine the environmental impact of the poultry industry in those states, and to consider what is best to protect our communities. Say no to SB 405.

Mary Fund, Executive Director, Kansas Rural Center