

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612
(785) 296-7686
melissa.rooker@house.ks.gov



4124 BROOKRIDGE DRIVE
FAIRWAY, KANSAS 66205
(913) 384-7371

MELISSA ROOKER
25TH DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of HB 2140
March 14, 2017

Thank you, Chairman LaTurner and members of the committee for allowing me to testify today.

Kansas is one of only five states in the country not currently a member of a firefighting compact and because of the lack of compact status, we lose the ability to intervene rapidly in times of escalating fire danger. By entering into the Great Plains Fire Compact, we not only gain the reciprocity with other member states, but we also gain reciprocity with all other compacts in the country.

As we have seen both last year in the Anderson Creek fires and currently in the outbreak of fires raging across our state, fire erupts quickly so every second matters. By entering into a compact, we will be able to streamline the process of calling on others for aid, as all questions of liability, jurisdiction, and other legalities are covered by the terms of the compact.

According to the terms of the compact, we still retain control of whether or not to answer the call when other members are in need. In fact, in Article IV the compact specifically calls on member states to maintain firefighting capacity at home and uses the legal phrase "may render aid" rather than "shall render aid consonant with maintaining protection at home.

As we seek ways to offer assistance to those affected by the wildfires we have seen wreak so much damage recently, I respectfully ask that you give approval of this plan so that we may also provide assistance to those who so bravely do battle in such emergencies.

Thank you,


Melissa Rooker