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February 9, 2023

PROPONENT TESTIMONY
HB 2226 – Amending the Kansas underground utility damage prevention act.
Patrick Vogelsberg
Kansas Gas Service
House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications

Chairman Delperdang and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Kansas Gas Service, a division of ONE Gas, Inc., in support of HB 2226. Kansas Gas Service is the state's largest, 100% regulated natural gas utility. We are proud to serve more than 647,000 customers across 360 Kansas communities.

Safety is our number one core value, and we are committed to operating safely and in an environmentally responsible manner. Protecting our natural gas infrastructure is critical for the safety of our employees, customers, and the communities we serve. Our system integrity efforts, including damage prevention, also reduce emissions from our natural gas distribution system. Kansas Gas Service is intimately familiar with the Kansas Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act (KUUDPA) because the act impacts our operations daily. Beyond being a KUUDPA-defined operator and meeting KUUDPA's line locating obligations, Kansas Gas Service excavates daily under the requirements of KUUDPA when installing or repairing our facilities.

Kansas Gas Service is directly involved in more than 350,000 locate ticket requests per year and views the amendments to KUUDPA favorably overall. Notable changes include updating the definition of "whitelining" to formally allow an excavator to designate excavation areas through electronic means as technology now permits. Electronic whitelining increases project efficiency and communication between excavators, utility operators and its locators. Additionally, updated language helps clarify that whitelining is required by excavators upon an operator's request.

Another change in KUUDPA is the extension of ticket life from 15 days to 20 days. This extended time to excavate under existing locate marks will help reduce the number of unnecessary update tickets called in by excavators. Allowing projects an additional five days of excavation under an original locate request helps operators and locators better manage resources for efficient response to requests, such as emergency tickets. Importantly, this change does not affect the existing excavator's responsibility to request re-mark tickets should locate marks be destroyed or not maintained during excavation activities within the 20 days.

The last change of note is the new requirement for excavators to immediately report damages to the Kansas Notification Center in addition to the existing requirement of reporting damages directly to the operator. This additional notification will help document and track damages for the state's ongoing damage prevention efforts.

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House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications

As the state's largest natural gas utility provider, acting as both an operator and excavator, Kansas Gas Service respectfully requests that the House Energy, Utilities, and Telecommunications Committee act favorably on HB 2226.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Vogelsberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P".

Patrick Vogelsberg
Manager of Government Affairs
Kansas Gas Service