

February 13, 2023
SB 88 – KCC Elections
Written Only
Opposition

From: John Donley, Kansas Farm Bureau, john@devineanddonley.com; (785) 246-8444

To: Senate Committee on Utilities, Senator Olson, Chairman

Chairman Olson and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present opposing testimony regarding SB 88 on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB.) KFB is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 30,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau Associations.

It is important to note that our policy is supportive of changing the make-up of the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC); however, we feel that SB 88 misses the mark in its attempt to make these changes. We do not feel that the election of commissioners is the best manner for choosing our KCC representatives

KFB policy on the subject states that “[t]he Kansas Corporation Commission should be expanded from three to seven members appointed by the Governor. At least one member should represent each Kansas Congressional District with the remaining members appointed at-large. No more than four Commissioners should be from the same political party and no two members should reside in the same county.”

A couple of other provisions in the bill raise serious concerns. First, the creation of a new division in the attorney general's office does not seem warranted. Additionally, the removal of the KCC from the open meetings laws raises significant concerns. Transparency in the dealings of the KCC is of paramount importance. KCC hearings are one of the few opportunities that landowners and ratepayers can become informed as to the siting of transmission lines and other key decisions.

While we have these concerns, we would like to reiterate that we feel that the make-up of the KCC could be improved. We welcome the ongoing dialogue that this bill will likely create, and we look forward to working with all interested parties to improve the make-up of the KCC.

Kansas Farm Bureau stands ready to assist the legislature as the discussion on the best approach to appoint or elect commissioners to the KCC moves forward. We will continue to monitor the situation and aid and advise as necessary to help move the state forward in this discussion.