

HOUSE BILL NO. 2095

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, Good Morning. I am Jerad Stroot, a water well contractor from the Wichita area. My company is Premier Pump and Well Service, Inc. where my brother and I operate as partners. The company provides services from McPherson County to Oklahoma. We have been in the industry for around 14 years and are licensed in the state of Kansas as well as my brother holding the license for the state of Oklahoma. I have been a member of the KGWA board of directors for 6 years, with the last year being president elect of the KGWA.

The reason I decided to become a board member is because the idea of a pump installers license has been talked about by the association for some time now. Where our water comes from is something that I took for granted as most people do. Upon entering the field, I began to understand the most precious resource we have is our aquifers, which is detrimental to the livelihood of so many Kansas. With owning the company, our family is establishing a multigenerational legacy, as most professionals in our industry strive to do. We are ensuring that the industry will survive, and the addition of the pump installation license will guarantee not only that our industry will continue, but that the groundwater remains safe.

I come here to represent the contractors in my area and their concerns as well in regard to this matter. I cannot speak for all areas of the state, as my particular area has a very shallow aquafer compared to most of the state. In our area, most wells on average are only 80' deep, the pumping equipment is easy to access and service without the use of specialized equipment. I am bringing this to your attention because in my particular area, anyone with a strong back can remove the pumping equipment directly from the ground by hand. Before I continue on the matter, I would like to make it clear that I am not opposed to people doing work on their own wells and being self-sufficient. There have been many times I have offered my customers the opportunity to do their own trenching for waterlines or power to the well. I understand saving a few dollars here and there, as I think we all try to do. However, when I have a customer that does this, I guide them to properly do the work. There have been times when a citizen has called a sprinkler or plumbing company who determines the well is the issue. I believe the simple vice of greed motivates these companies to perform service on a well without regard to industry standards and state licensing regulations. Most are uneducated in the proper procedures and precautions when servicing pumping equipment. Most do not understand that upon removing the equipment and replacing it, there is an elevated risk in introducing contamination from the surface directly into the aquafer. When pumps are removed, they are typically laid on the ground. The yard may have been treated recently for insects or fertilization by normal lawn care procedures. Pumps might also collect debris such as leaves, grass clippings etc. and there is always a chance that there may be animal waste that has collected on the

equipment. All of the potential contaminant sources may be transferred to the pumping equipment and introduced into the groundwater if proper sterilization is not done.

I have spoken to contractors in my area, all are in agreement that the revisions to add a separate license for pumps is something that they would like to see. Some have provided me with examples of situations where a company without a license has performed well work, those are as follows:

Countless times citizens without water have called an unlicensed company, these companies then come out to diagnose the issue. They may determine the well is the cause and address it without hesitation. Some have replaced existing pumps with oversized new ones, causing wells to collapse. Others have replaced all equipment, costing the customer substantial funds, only to fail to fix the issue. In turn they give up and walk away, referring the customer to call a well company. This leaves the customer with no water and a hefty bill in the mail.

In one case in particular, the well was in the basement of the home. An unlicensed company was called and upon completion of the job returned the water service to the home. A well contractor then followed to correct the low-pressure issue that remained and saw the well casing was cut to flush with the basement floor and no proper seal was installed on the casing. Fortunately, he was able to see this and corrected it. This could have been a potential source of contamination as a well with no seal giving direct access to

the aquifer. Had a chemical been spilt or the sewer backed up into the house, there would have been nothing to stop it from reaching the aquifer.

I have spoken with supply house companies in my area and asked them on average how many pumps they sell to unlicensed companies in a summer, the combined number was 750. Now if that is an average for a quarter of the year, one could assume that they sell 3,000 per year on average. That is 3,000 times an unlicensed company has potentially introduced contamination to our aquifer by not following proper procedures set forth by the KDHE.

I am not here because we want the license due to a loss of revenue but rather as a licensed water well contractor we are held to a high standard. Standards such as expectations by the KDHE to meet the proper procedures. We are responsible for our education, as well as anyone employed by our respective companies. We do believe that this license will force the unlicensed companies to comply with regulations set forth and help to educate them. I personally enjoy learning all that I can about this unique industry, and I strive to be the best that I can. As license holders we all must go to continuing education classes to keep our license. At most classes, the KDHE is there presenting information about what has been happening around the state. Sometimes it may be instances where regulations weren't followed and there were consequences, or about new contamination being discovered that we as groundwater professionals should be aware of. If it is not an aforementioned example, it could be a simple reminder about proper procedures or revisions to the

regulations, these things are always good to be informed about. I know all licensed contractors comply with these regulations; however, I do know that there are individuals or companies that install cased wells with no permits or education. My company also services larger wells, such as wells for the irrigation of crops for the farmers. I know of center pivot companies in my area servicing these wells also without being licensed in any way.

I know that the surrounding states have pump licenses already in place, separate from the drilling license. Oklahoma in particular has 3 separate licenses, one for drilling, and 2 for the different types of pumps used in wells. I believe that is an excellent idea, but we are not here for something to that extreme. We are here advocating for some regulation or control in this area of our industry to help protect the groundwater. We would like to see individuals or companies that work on wells to be held to the same standards we are and educated in the matter.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude by reminding you how important water is in our state. With the current drought affecting all parts of the state it is vital now more than ever to protect our water, because when it is gone it is gone. It is our duty to remain trained

and educated to the very high standards set forth by the KDHE. We cannot change what is down there, only protect it. We can try to remediate contamination and minimize damage, but you can never make it go away, potentially ruining the water in that area permanently. As groundwater professionals we all do our part to protect it, it is time for the unlicensed or uneducated individuals to be held accountable. The only way to do that is with the addition of a license requirement for groundwater pumps.

Thank you for your time and attention.