

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Kale Kitterman, and I am a lifelong resident of Southeast Kansas, currently residing in rural Cherokee County.

I am here today to speak in opposition to HB2268, which I understand would reduce the number of days non-resident hunters are allowed to waterfowl hunt on our public lands. While I understand concerns about overcrowding on public lands, I also believe there will be significant secondary and tertiary effects that could negatively impact our local communities and residents.

First and foremost, this bill would result in a loss of revenue for the state, especially in terms of hunting license sales. Hunters may choose to travel to other states, leaving Kansas behind. More importantly, though, it would lead to a loss of tax revenue for local areas where these public lands are located. As you are aware, state lands do not generate property tax revenue for counties, yet they still place a strain on local road districts and public safety departments. For example, my local fire department frequently responds to emergencies on our public lands, including fires, rescues, and medical incidents.

If we restrict non-resident visitors to our area, these individuals will no longer spend money in our local communities. Restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, and hotels all benefit from the tourism of non-residents who come here to hunt. This spending directly correlates to tax revenues for our counties. In fact, my family owns and operates several AirBnB homes in the area, and over 70% of our guests in the fall are hunters here for our public lands. If this bill passes, they will choose to spend their money in other states that welcome their tourism.

I also fear that this bill could have unintended negative effects for residents of our area. Currently, many landowners allow permission hunting for waterfowl. However, if this bill passes, non-resident hunters will continue to seek out private land for leasing opportunities. This will not only drive up an already steep hunting lease rate but also push resident hunters off their permission spots, leading to more congestion on our public lands.

Southeast Kansas is fortunate to have a significant amount of public land available for all people to enjoy. These lands are meant for everyone — both residents and non-residents. All sportsmen contribute through taxes, including the Pittman-Robertson Act, which provides funding to the state. Given that everyone contributes, why should we restrict access to these lands?

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to take any questions you may have.