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To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Representative Larry Powell, Chair

From: Mike Beam, Kansas Livestock Association

Re: **Testimony in support of House Bill No. 2517, a bill making the water transition assistance program permanent.**

Date: February 1, 2012

*The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing over 5,300 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry, including seed stock, cow-calf and stocker production, cattle feeding, dairy production, grazing land management and diversified farming operations.*

The “water transition assistance program” (WTAP) was authorized by the 2006 Kansas Legislature as a voluntary incentive based program that must be applied to local targeted areas that would benefit from reductions in water consumption. These areas are determined by the Chief Engineer, and in some instances the local Ground Water Management District. The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) supported the legislation in 2006, which included a sunset provision [KSA 2011 Supp. 2-1930 (m)] of five years after the state appropriated funds for the program and after the approval of rules and regulations. KLA believes it’s important to repeal this sunset, thus we are lending our support for the passage of HB 2517.

The committee is aware that Kansas has areas of the state that are closed to new water appropriations. In some instances there are areas that are considered “over appropriated”. For this reason, we believe state programs like WTAP provide a tool to reduce consumptive use, on a targeted basis, to lessen the chances of impairment to vested and senior water rights. Again, it’s a voluntary approach to buy out water rights (or reduce the amount of water use from a water right) so the long-term use of water in targeted areas may get to a more sustainable level.

To those who are sensitive to state spending, we remind them that this bill does not appropriate state funds. Those spending decisions must be made through other legislative actions.

In summary, KLA supports the continuation of the authority for WTAP and urges this committee to pass the bill favorably. Thank you!