

From: Steve Sorensen [webforbs@cox.net]
Sent: Tuesday, March 13, 2012 9:56 PM
To: Jerry Williams; Vince Wetta; Brian Weber; Ponka-We Victors; Caryn Tyson; Willie Prescott; Larry Powell; Charlotte O'Hara; Tom Moxley; Dan Kerschen; Kyle Hoffman; Brett Hildabrand; Gary Hayzlett; Bob Grant; Dan Collins; Bob Brookens; Elaine Bowers; Tom Arpke; Michael Peterson
Subject: HB 2587



March 13, 2012

Dear Chairman Powell and Representatives of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

The Kansas Wildlife Federation is a 62-year old statewide non-profit grassroots organization with over 1,200 members. We are an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation and represent approximately 8,000 members and associates of the NWF in Kansas. KWF promotes hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and conservationists.

We oppose HB 2587 because of the impediments it has on conservation easements. Conservation easements have been used to protect critical habitat for endangered or threatened species of wildlife. In Kansas species benefiting specifically from conservation easements are the Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chicken. While Lesser Prairie-Chickens are not currently listed as Threatened or Endangered, they are listed as Warranted but Precluded, which means they should be listed but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not have the ability to properly address their status.

The Kansas Wildlife Federation, along with numerous conservation organizations in Kansas, has been working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to offer landowners options to maintain the Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chicken populations at levels to keep it off the T&E list. Conservation easements are one of those options.

Kansas will likely receive enhanced USDA/NRCS conservation easement funds to protect expanses of grasslands for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken. If Kansas were to enact HB 2587 it's doubtful that we receive such funds with the restrictions or obstacles of the bill. Why would anyone provide funds for a conservation easement that could be terminated any time the landowner wishes...or be limited to 50 years? The decline of grasslands dependant bird species is a perpetual problem, not a 50 year problem.

There are many Kansas landowners who have shown their willingness to sell perpetual conservation easements...but HB 2587 will take this property right option away from them.

We urge you to oppose HB 2587 and allow landowners to utilize perpetual conservation easements as a way to maintain their good stewardship of the ranches and farms of Kansas. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steven G. Sorensen".

Steven G. Sorensen
Conservation VP
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The Kansas Wildlife Federation promotes hunting and fishing opportunities and associated recreation for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and conservationists. KWF supports the sustainable use and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats through education, partnerships, outreach, and policy oversight.