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Testimony by Wendell Turner
SB-262

My name is Wendell Turner. I live in Wichita and I am Speaker of the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature.

Today I want to talk about what can and does happen to children when Grandparents don't have rights. I will use my Grandsons Barry and Troy and how they were treated as an example.

But first I want to talk about the budget which I know is a real challenge for all of you so I want to help you with that. The best way to put it is Grandparents work cheaper than foster parents. In fact I have known Grandparents to pay for the privilege of taking care of their Grandchildren if they can afford it, some if they can't afford it. It cost over \$26,000 a year to keep a child in foster care. I'll let you do the math.

While the budget is important what I really care about is Grandchildren and how they are being torn away from their families for no reason other than Grandparents don't have rights to their Grandchildren in the State of Kansas.

On the evening of May 4, 2007 the same evening Greensburg was destroyed by a tornado SRS and the Wichita Police took Barry and Troy into protective custody. The protective part didn't work out to well.

We were fortunate that a neighbor called and told us they had been taken. If she hadn't we wouldn't have known what happened to those little boys.

Let me thank you now for passing the Bill last session making Grandparents interested parties without having to ask. We can never thank you enough for that. Now that you have us in the court room we would like to be recognized as important persons in those children's lives.

Since Barry and Troy had spent about as much time at our house as they did at their dad's house – in fact they had their own room at our house – we assumed they would be coming to us. What they did was take them to the

Wichita Children's Home. I called the next day and they gave me a number to call on Monday at SRS.

The lady I talked to at SRS ask me a lot of questions and told me they would be in touch.

We were ordered to appear in court the next Wednesday. Why I don't know. We were always treated as if we didn't count. We were to learn later we didn't.

In our ignorance we thought we would be bringing the boys home with us because we thought everyone would do what was best for the children. I have never been so wrong about anything in my rather long life at a time I needed to be right. We dusted their room, stocked up on groceries and Grandma prepared their favorite foods. Grandmas know these things.

When we got to court we took a seat in the waiting room and after a while the boys came in with their keeper - officially known as a Family Support Worker - and he worked for Youthville and he would be with the boys anytime they were in Wichita.

He later told me his previous experience was fence builder and now he was in charge of 2 of our Grandkids. The boys broke away from their keeper and ran over to us and after the hugs little Troy said, "How did you know where we were". That poor little boy thought he was lost forever. The keeper said we have to go see the judge and that was the last time we saw them for a month.

Keep in mind they had never spent a night any where except at their dad's house or ours. In case you are wondering why I keep calling it their dad's house, that is what they have always called it. Our house is home.

We were finally called into the court room and the judge looked up and said, "is this the Grandparents"? Some lady who seemed to be a little smarter than the rest said, "yes" and that was the last time we were recognized as living in the same world as the rest of that bunch. After the judge left the smart lady that could say, "yes" gave us a Youthville case managers business card with another number on the back and said someone would contact us about the boys coming to live with us. Our contact person would be the keeper

although he never returned our calls. Youthville was now in control of our grandkids and they were in trouble.

The next day I called the children's home and ask if we could come see the boys. I was told they were no longer there. They had been moved to a foster home in Lyons. Everyone in that court room knew that but us the day before and no one told us. We were stunned to say the least.

We finally received letter in the mail informing us of a case plan meeting at Youthville in a couple of weeks.

When we got to the meeting it had been going on for an hour and a half but we hadn't been invited to that part. That by the way is against the law.

During the meeting I noticed that one of Barry's 6th grade teachers was there. I thought that strange because when he was Barry's teacher he would call the house in the summer and ask if Barry could go swimming. We wouldn't let him go. He would drive by their house real slow and watch the kids if they were outside. Something just wasn't quiet right about him.

When the meeting was over we were told to stay. The keeper and some girl we hadn't seen before or since wanted to talk to us. We thought they were going to tell us when the boys would be coming to us. We learn slow. After everyone else left we were told we wouldn't get the boys. My wife said, "I think it's time to get a lawyer". The girl said, "It won't do you any good because Grandparents don't have rights". We thought she was lying. She wasn't.

I ask the keeper who was taking them and he said, "That teacher". I explained to him they would not be going to that teacher and when he found out we were objecting he withdrew.

I have placed a paper in front of each of you and at the top it says KAKEland and in the top right is a picture of that teacher. He currently resides in the Cowley County jail awaiting trial for child molestation.

That is the person Youthville picked to take care of our Grandchildren over us.

Finally after spending \$ 2,000 of our retirement fund on a lawyer the boys came to live with us for 10 months. Youthville recommended they be sent back to the place they were taken from in conditions just as bad as they were removed from.

We have never been allowed to speak in court and our lawyer has never allowed to attend the back room meetings where they decided what to do with the boys.

Over 18,000 Grandparents in Kansas are taking care of their Grandchildren but they can be taken away without cause on the whim of a case manager.

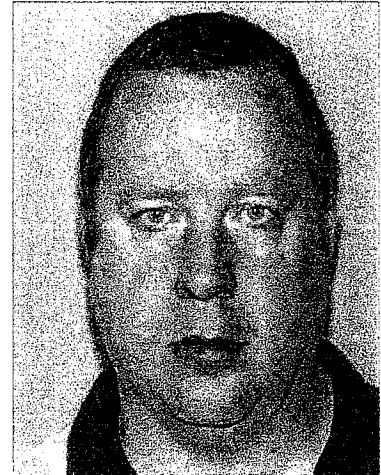
I could go on and on about what happened to those little boys, In fact I have written a book about it but time is limited.

We aren't asking for much, just the right to protect our Grandchildren.

Authorities Continue Hunt For Accused Child Molester

Forty-six-year-old Noble "Rick" Pendland disappeared as Arkansas City authorities attempted to talk to him about recent child molestation accusations. Meanwhile, a local couple says the man never should have been allowed to be around children.

Reporter: Jared Cerullo
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Tuesday, September 20, 2011

Forty-six-year-old Noble "Rick" Pendland disappeared as Arkansas City authorities attempted to talk to him about recent child molestation accusations. Meanwhile, a local couple says the man never should have been allowed to be around children.

Pendland has worked around children for a number of years and authorities even tell us they're concerned he will seek employment in the teaching or foster care field somewhere else.

Wendell and Ruby Turner knew Pendland through both of those means. Today, they told KAKE News they're not surprised at these recent developments.

The Turners first met Pendland when he became their grandson's teacher at Hamilton Middle School in Wichita. Pendland worked there until 2008. USD 259 confirms Pendland left the district citing family relocation to Arkansas City.

"Me and Ruby both, we right away suspected this guy wasn't on the up and up when we first met him," said Wendell Turner.

The Turners became skeptical of Pendland when he not only started offering to take the children to the swimming pool, but then started driving by their house.

"He lived in Rose Hill and he would drive by," Turner explained. "It was out of his way to come by here. He would drive by real slow to see what was going on. We would get calls

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and he would want to come get them (the children) and go swimming. We wouldn't let him because we were a little bit suspicious of him."

Pendland worked at Hamilton starting in 2003. USD 259 says they had no problems and no complaints, but that Pendland left the district in 2008 citing a family relocation to Arkansas City. Pendland also became a licensed foster parent through the Youthville program.

In an emailed statement, Youthville tells KAKE News that all foster families undergo a thorough licensing process and attend 10 weeks of training. Youthville refused to say how long Pendland was affiliated with the organization or discuss the results of his background check.

Turner, however, complains that the Youthville background checks are worthless.

"They're not good," he said. "I don't know about the school district, but Youthville's are not worth a plug nickel. I'm sure they go in there and check to see if you've been involved in a hold up or killed somebody... but as far as people go... just terrible."

The Turners became very concerned when their grandchildren's parents split up and the kids ended up in the Youthville organization.

"I asked, 'Well who is going to have custody of them?' and she said that teacher. Well, that's the teacher that's now in the news."

Ultimately, the grandchildren did not end up with Pendland and they say they are thankful for that.

Authorities in Ark City now are focusing on getting in touch with him to talk to him about the current child molestation cases he's accused of. But Ark City Police also say they are not even getting cooperation from Pendland's family.

If you know his whereabouts, call Ark City Crime Stoppers at 620-442-7777.

Find this article at:

http://www.kake.com/home/headlines/Authorities_Continue_Hunt_For_Accused_Child_Molester_130232213.html

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