



WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

**Neutral Testimony to the
House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
House Bill No. 2820
Randy Leis
Kansas Legislative Policy Group
March 12, 2024**

Member Counties

Barber

Barton

Clark

Ellis

Finney

Ford

Gove

Grant

Gray

Hamilton

Harper

Haskell

Hodgeman

Kearny

Kiowa

Lane

Logan

Meade

Ness

Norton

Rawlins

Rice

Rush

Russell

Scott

Seward

Sherman

Stanton

Stevens

Thomas

Trego

Wallace

Wichita

Chairman Tarwater, Vice Chair Borjon, Ranking Member Probst and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing this written testimony regarding HB 2820. I am Randy Leis, a Meade County, Kansas, county commissioner who also holds the position of President of the Kansas Legislative Policy Group (KLPG).

The nonpartisan, nonprofit KLPG is made up of elected commissioners who speak for the interests of thirty-three rural counties in Kansas. KLPG is the one of the oldest local government associations in Kansas, having been founded nearly 50 years ago.

The bill includes language that would prohibit local governments from purchasing or using drones manufactured in countries that are viewed as threats to U. S. national security. We understand the importance of this legislation.

Drones can be controlled remotely and come with high-resolution cameras. Drones are a critical life-saving tool routinely used by counties for a variety of tasks, including law enforcement, search and rescue missions, emergency services and geographic information system mapping.

Drones that many KLPG member counties have acquired are not compliant with HB 2820 should it become law. The cost of a replacement drone might range from \$10,000 to \$35,000, depending on its features and capabilities. It would be very expensive and difficult for many counties to replace the current drones.

Several other states have placed bans on foreign manufactured drones and created grant programs to assist local departments in the transition. As the demand for conforming drones increases, we hope affordable replacement options become available. We kindly request that the Committee consider creating a state drone assistance fund that local governments might use to replace drones that do not adhere to HB 2820's regulations.

Thank you for considering this recommendation.