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Representative Jim Minnix
House Water Committee
Re: Opposition to HB 2459

Dear Chairman Minnix and the House Water Committee:

My name is Kirk Heger and I am a board member of the Southwest Kansas Irrigation Association (SWKIA). The SWKIA is a trade association based around the irrigation industry in South West and South Central Kansas. Founded in 1956, SWKIA was one of the very first water management and conservation minded organizations to form in Kansas. We have been involved in every major water management discussion since that time.

Today I write to voice SWKIA's strong opposition to HB 2459. The concept of precluding any change in the point of diversion in Western Kansas water is not only bad public policy, but it in effect binds the hands of our local farmers, ranchers, and irrigators. If enacted, HB 2459 would have drastic impacts on the state economy and on Kansas agriculture. Governor Kelly in her State of the State Address spoke of "empowering our rural communities" as a focal point of her administration. This bill would destroy the livelihood of numerous farmers and ranchers in Western Kansas and undermine the economic viability of our communities that support rural schools, hospitals, property tax base, and local businesses--and don't forget the effect this bill, if passed, would have on population migration out of rural Kansas. She states "when rural Kansas does well, all Kansans do well". This bill must not receive any more attention if we truly want Kansas to prosper.

We believe it should not be the role of the Kansas Legislature to micromanage our industry, but instead to rely on industry experts and stakeholders to work together to come up with sustainable solutions that benefit producers and consumers. Let us work together to create solutions to our state's water issues, not against one another.

Thank you for your consideration—we ask that you not let HB 2459 proceed any further. I am available for questions and further conversation on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Kirk Heger
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