

## **Testimony HB2686**

**Chairman Highland, committee, and staff,  
thank you for the opportunity to testify.**

**I am Titus Jaeger from Lakin, Kansas.**

**I represent 4 generations of our family who have actively been part of agriculture in Western Kansas for a 100 years. Today my wife and I are raising the 5th generation on my side and the 7th generation on my wife's side to be involved in agriculture production pursuits in Western Kansas. Agriculture is our LIFE and our LIVELIHOOD, our family has pursued stewardship through conservation from time we arrived in Wichita County in 1921. Our ancestors persevered through the 'Dirty Thirties' and it was the development of our water resources which was credited with reducing the effects of the drought in the 50s and the prolonged drought of the early 2000s, which recorded less precipitation than the drought of the 30s. Our water resources have fueled the lifeblood of the Western Kansas economy since their development.**

**I oppose HB2686 in its entirety. As we sit here today folks in Western Kansas face a bleak future. The Arkansas River has completely lost streamflow from Garden City to Dodge City in my lifetime. As a result we have lost an entire ecosystem. We have lost population and many independent small businesses, farms, and ranches. We need a combination of actions, strategies, and policies that support our people and our communities that are good for agriculture, our ecology, and the economy that offer HOPE. I understand the the desire to streamline the agency structure but fault the strategy. Consolidation motivated by government policy is killing Western Kansas. Anthropologist at KU showed a consolidated agriculture without people has depopulated Western Kansas with an accompanying collapse in social relationships. Today it may appear like streamlining and consolidation save money and improve efficiency but it eliminates people. Today we are thankful for and benefit greatly from our neighbors who are staff with DWR, KWO, DOC, and KDHE. These folks are part of our communities they bring value, connection, and relationships to**

**Western Kansas. I fear the day when consolidation moves these positions and people to Topeka in the name of efficiency and cost savings. Our focus needs to favor collaboration over consolidation.**

**The UAR CREP a voluntary, incentive-based program initiated in 2007 is the most robust targeted permanent WATER and LAND conservation story in Western Kansas to date. The program leveraged the largest collaborative effort and partnership of State agencies and organizations in recent history. The program permanently retired 47500 AF . . . with 46,293 AF or 97.5% of the total enrollment in 4 counties represented by GMD3. . . in Hamilton, Kearny, Finney, and Gray. The formation of the Kansas department of water and environment will abolish 4 of the partners KWO; KDHE division of environment; Kansas department of agriculture, division of conservation; and Kansas department of agriculture, division of water resources; which collaborated and partnered to leverage Federal funds and 2 federal agencies to fund and implement the program.**

**I oppose Sec. 9 (a), the water rights fee collected for the maintenance fund. The fee takes local money, communizing local resources to fund at its discretion projects which may be outside the local jurisdiction never to see the collected funds return to its originating locale, reducing local control and expanding central government. We believe local dollar should remain local or return to local projects.**

**I oppose Sec 10, modification of the GMD elections. . . because one of the Purposes of the Groundwater Management District is lost: . . . the right of local water users to determine their destiny with respect to the use of the groundwater. By opening up eligibility of election to citizens outside of the GMD boundary. It is also unclear if this election modification applies to district conservation board member election.**

**We can seek an ABUNDANT thriving future full of excitement, pride, and confidence with VISION for growth, opportunity, and**

**enjoyment giving positive direction to our state, our cities, and our rural small towns. Kansas is the place to be!**

**Help advance the  
UPPER ARK Regional Advisory Committee**

**GOAL: Establish a diversified, usable water supply by 2030, to motivate a vibrant growing economy with conservation-minded stewardship focused on increasing the life of the aquifer, reestablishing streamflow in the Arkansas River, and accelerating recharge; benefiting: economic prosperity, wildlife, habitat, recreation, and all water users while protecting property rights and providing safe drinking water.**

**This can be accomplished by**

- 1- conservation-minded stewardship**
- 2- a complete rewrite of our state water laws with neighboring states**
- 3- new sources of supply**

**Not just one of these, but all 3 will be necessary to better protect, conserve, control, use, increase, develop and provide for the**

**enjoyment of the water and environment of this state.**

**Our neighbors in Northeast Colorado formed the Republican River Water Conservation District and use WATER TRANSFER combined with CREP and EQIP to meet conservation objectives and maintain streamflow. Prioritizing local involvement and management while securing a viable future for rural communities on the Eastern High Plains of Colorado. We could do the same!**

**Our neighbors in Nebraska recognize the need to secure water for the future.... And are developing a water right which will divert their water in Colorado into a new canal and reservoir in Nebraska.... Why don't we do the same?**

**I close my testimony with:**

**A TRIBUTE to the pioneers, From John A. Martin, Governor of Kansas, who delivered an address at the Southwestern Exposition, in Garden City, October, 1886: “ The loneliness and immensity of the plains had no terrors for**

**you. You invaded their solitudes, you pushed the frontier steadily westward. You plowed and planted, and digged and sowed. You were determined to conquer the land, by irrigation if necessary. You came to stay, and you conquered. You saw the wilderness vanish, until at last every doubting Thomas was silenced and the whole world realized that here, On the western borders of Kansas, was as rich, as beautiful, and as productive a land as the sun, journeying from continent to continent, looks down upon and warms with his genial rays.**

**“ there is something splendid in the march of civilization into and over an unpeopled land . . . something grander, even than the advance of a victorious army. It is better to build up rather than to destroy . . . better to redeem a desert than to make one. The march of the armies of industry and peace across the plains, people in their solitudes, conquering the wilderness, and forcing from its soil a fatness, is an achievement romantic and inspiring. And you, people of Western Kansas, are the heroes of this conquest.”**

**Thank you**