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Testimony of Angeliina Lawson, Lobbyist, Land On The Range

**For the Senate Local Government Committee
Regarding Senate Bill No. 325**

January 27, 2022

Opponent Testimony

**“Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable;
it is a positive good in the world.”
- Abraham Lincoln**

Madame Chair and members of this committee,

My name is Angeliina Lawson and I am here today representing Land On The Range, land owners who look to maximize the value of their current and future land revenues and market value. Land On The Range works to help provide information about the highest and best use of land. The issues involved include redevelopment of brownfields, mineral rights, conservation programs, zoning, economic development, infrastructure, last-mile utility solutions. I am also a land specialist and represent many clients in land acquisition, site selection, and analyze trends that impact market values of land.

Abraham Lincoln is often cited for his understanding of the American citizenry of his time as well as the nation our country could become. His quotation regarding property is often cited to remind us that owning our own land, our own homes, and control of our own lives is a fundamental value in and of itself. While the quote above is stated on its own, less often the follow up appears: “Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another.” In this quote, the state legislature represents the houseless, who do not live next door to those making the decisions but are intent on inserting their will to tear down the efforts of others. In line 13 of Senate Bill 325, the legislators take that step of inserting themselves into that decision making process intent to tear down the house of others.

Under the Kansas Constitution, Article 12, Section 5, Kansas municipalities and cities are set to be the determining body for zoning and property regulation issues thanks to their closer ties with local citizenry. Zoning requirements in Johnson County are simply not the same as they would be within, as an example, Chase, Neosho, Hamilton or Meade county. All counties have their own understanding of the needs for their communities.

In reviewing Senate Bill 325, Land On The Range stands opposed, recognizing that rural property owners, and those who seek to maximize the revenue of the land under their control do not currently and have not openly asked for a bureaucratic control over the land which they own, and which may have been passed to them through generations. In study after study, individuals who move or stay in rural communities contend that freedom, autonomy, and their connection and control of their own land and real estate are significant in their choices of where to live.



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Senate Bill 325 creates an effective Rural Home Owners Association, a value common in more urban areas like Johnson County, but a deed restriction type entity that is uncommon and unwelcome in rural communities.

Senate Bill 325 also fundamentally misunderstands the realities and difficulties in creating local elections which would satisfy the goal of the legislation at hand. Farm lands may cross county lines, precinct lines, and the number of qualified “electors” would be difficult to determine. Establishing who would be allowed to participate in such an election, as well as calculating the cost of conducting such an election are not included within this legislation, and as such, it would create a significant unfunded mandate passed on to a city, county or multiple counties.

The legislation at hand does not address if such special election would occur with a standing primary or a standing general election, or if it would be conducted via mail. The list of procedures to be addressed by counties and costs incurred are not compensated to the city, county or counties, and as a result, we would pit neighbor against neighbor. Special elections in some rural areas could result in such a small voting pool, potentially fewer than 10 voters, that the voting outcome could easily create a toxic culture in a community where determining how your neighbors voted, and the fact they voted against your own ability to earn an income would not dissipate. Waiting, knowing that your neighbors can vote to remove supplemental income that can be key in saving the family farm is a certain way to create animosity and community division. Cherry picked voting outcomes could create uneven enforcement, guaranteeing the belief in communities that favoritism determines which families survive and which are forced out of their communities. Our state legislature should not take the capricious steps proposed in Senate Bill 325, which will make possession of property in rural communities less desirable.

On behalf of land owners, Land On The Range strongly urges rejection of Senate Bill 325.



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