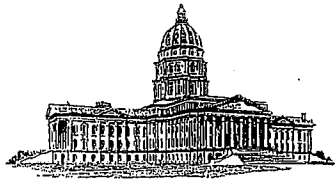


REYNALDO R. MESA
123RD DISTRICT
reynaldo.mesa@house.ks.gov

STATE OF KANSAS

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
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TOPEKA
HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

TO: Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
Senator Pete Brungardt, Chairman

FR: Representative Reynaldo Mesa, 123rd District, Kansas House of Representatives

DATE: February 15, 2012

RE: SB 399 – Supporting the Kansas Business Workers and Community Partnership Act

I thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, for this opportunity to testify. As you know, my name is Representative Reynaldo Mesa. I represent the 123rd District of the great state of Kansas in the Kansas House of Representative and am here today to speak in support of SB 399, the Kansas Business Workers and Community Partnership Act.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first term in the Kansas House of Representatives, but I must admit that the issue of immigration has been an issue that has left me frustrated. Everyone recognizes the federal government needs to address the problems with immigration; politics seem to outweigh good public policy unfortunately. SB 399 is a bill that takes a proactive and realistic approach to this issue while protecting families and avoiding harm to the Kansas economy.

In my region of the state, southwest Kansas, the Hispanic community has been an active, important part of the local community for many years. They are an important part of the businesses that help southwest Kansas thrive. They are often the owners of the businesses that have flourished in our area. I often hear reports from business owners that are struggling to find good workers to fill the jobs. Furthermore, I do not want to see an opportunity pass the state by regarding growing animal agriculture in Kansas while we have a governor that has focused on that initiative. The most limiting factor in growing agriculture in Western Kansas is the lack of an adequate workforce.

There is a criticism that the employers that utilize Hispanic labor "just need to pay more." As you will likely see from the upcoming testimony, this is simply not the case. Many of the jobs in the industries that have been criticized have entry level wages of \$25,000 per year. This is greater than 45% of the entry level positions found in the 2011 Kansas Wage Survey.

It should be noted that there are great industries that are the economic drivers of the Kansas economy all across the state that are facing shortages of adequate workers. This is an issue that affects all Kansans. A vibrant economy is necessary to keep Kansas growing.

I challenge my colleagues to put the politics of this issue aside and truly analyze SB 399 on its merits. It is attempting to handle the issue within the state of Kansas instead of shifting it to other states. It is also helping to keep families together instead of driving them apart. Finally, SB 399 manages the issue without causing the extreme economic harm that has occurred in Arizona, Alabama, Georgia, and other states that have enacted "self-deportation" policies. Not to mention the costs that state and local governments have incurred in litigation defending the inevitable lawsuits.

I support a policy that keeps families together. I support a policy that does not harm the Kansas economy, but sends a signal that we want to grow the Kansas economy. I support putting politics aside and doing what is right for Kansas communities, Kansas workers, and Kansas businesses. I support SB 399.

Thank you.