

Testimony Opposing SB 405

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I am Tad Kramar and thank you for the opportunity to testify against SB 405. My wife and I have a small fruit and vegetable farm in Big Springs, Kansas, and sell eggs from our approximately 150 free-range chickens. We are dismayed that the House is considering SB 405, which would allow up to 333,333 chickens to be placed within ¼ mile of a habitable structure, and up to 100,000 chickens to be placed only 100 feet away from a neighbor's property line. Exhaust from powerful fans in these buildings would spread dangerous and foul-smelling manure particles and bacteria to area residents and communities.

Moreover, chicken manure contains a much larger proportion of nitrogen and phosphorus than cow manure, creating a major threat to streams and drinking water from waste runoff. To make matters even worse, the odors, pollution, increases in rodents and flies, and large truck traffic created by these facilities will lower the value of properties in the area.

Let's face it, the real purpose of this bill is to make it easier for Tyson Foods and other enormous chicken slaughterers to establish massive chicken barns and slaughterhouses throughout Kansas. Although this is alleged to be an economic development opportunity, is this really what you want for your communities and constituents? Let's look at the record.

Between 1996 and 2001, Tyson repeatedly discharged untreated or inadequately treated wastewater from its Sedalia, MO chicken plant despite numerous warnings, administrative orders, two lawsuits by the State of Missouri and two Missouri court injunctions. Finally in 2003, Tyson pleaded guilty to 20 felony violations of the Clean Water Act and agreed to pay a \$7.5 million fine. In 2009, Tyson pleaded guilty and agreed to pay a \$500,000 fine for willfully violating a worker safety violation that caused the death of an employee due to exposure to dangerous hydrogen sulfide gas.

Then, in 2013 Tyson agreed to pay almost \$4 million as a result of a series of releases of poisonous anhydrous ammonia at Tyson chicken plants in Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska, causing another death, multiple injuries and property damage. It doesn't stop there! Just last fall Tyson agreed to pay a \$2 million fine for causing the release of an amino acid compound into the City of Monett, Missouri's wastewater treatment system, resulting in severe pollution of a nearby stream, killing all of the fish over 4.5 miles. Do you want the next death or serious violation to occur in your community?

Massive chicken plants are not only bad for the surrounding communities, but bad for their workers. Chicken plant workers tend to earn low wages, suffer higher rates of injury, and toil in substandard and sometimes dangerous working conditions. To make matters worse, in hundreds of interviews reported in 2016, most industrial chicken plant workers said they were not even allowed adequate bathroom breaks, and many have to wear adult diapers to work. Would you personally consider the career of slaughtering chickens all day?

In addition, Tyson determined that the riskiest and least profitable part of this sorry business is raising the chickens, so Tyson farms this out to large numbers of individuals (up to 400 huge chicken barns for each massive slaughterhouse). These individuals must incur crushing debt to build the enormous chicken barns and acquire the expensive equipment needed.

It has been well established in documentaries such as *Food, Inc.* that the chicken barn owners are practically held hostage by Tyson, because if they do not do everything Tyson requires, Tyson can simply stop buying from them, leaving them no way to pay the debt. These individuals then face financial ruin and bankruptcy. Is this the kind of economic development you want for your community?

If you want to create economic opportunities, please vote “no” on SB 405 and instead promote businesses that create good jobs rather than degrading jobs that produce personal injury and suffering to people, animals and the surrounding communities. I will be happy to answer any questions.