

SESSION OF 2024

**SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2800**

As Recommended by House Committee on  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Brief\***

HB 2800 would amend law regarding conservation districts.

[*Note:* Conservation districts were first established in law by the Legislature in 1937 following the Dust Bowl. The conservation district is the main local unit of government regarding the conservation of soil, water, and other related natural resources located within the boundaries of a county and operates under the purview of the Division of Conservation (Division) of the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA).]

The bill would change the date from September 1 to November 1 by which conservation districts are required to submit a certification to the Division of the amount of money required for conservation district activities each year.

The bill would increase the cap on the amount of funding that would be allocated by the Division to the conservation districts from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per district, starting in fiscal year (FY) 2025. The bill would also increase the State's current matching funding from \$1 to \$2 state funding to \$1 county funding.

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\*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

## **Background**

The bill was introduced by the House Committee on Appropriations at the request of Representative Hoffman.

### ***House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources***

In the House Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by Representative Blex, the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and the Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts. The proponents stated the increased state matching funds and higher cap will allow the KDA to distribute more moneys to conservation districts that can be used for salaries and wages for conservation district managers and upkeep of conservation district equipment. The proponents also noted that conservation district manager turnover is a notable problem across the state due to low pay and lack of benefits and that this position is the first point-of-contact for any conservation district and requires significant training and experience.

Written-only proponent testimony was provided by the Kansas Association of Counties, Kansas Corn Growers Association, Kansas Farm Bureau, and The Nature Conservancy.

No other testimony was provided.

## **Fiscal Information**

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, the KDA estimates that enactment of the bill could increase state aid to conservation districts in the agency's Division. The KDA indicates the FY 2024 appropriation from the State Water Plan Fund (SWPF) totaling \$2.5 million provided an average of \$23,835 per disbursement to each district. These disbursements to

conservation districts occurred on July 5, 2023 (beginning of FY 2024).

The *Governor's FY 2025 Budget Report* recommends a \$2.5 million appropriation from the SWPF and a \$1.0 million transfer from the 2023 HB 2302 Projects Fund in the Kansas Water Office for state aid to conservation districts. The KDA notes the appropriation and transfer could increase state aid to conservation districts in FY 2025; however, any state aid to conservation districts would be subject to the ultimately legislative-approved appropriation and the matching county commissions allocations to conservation districts. As a result, a fiscal effect for FY 2025 cannot be estimated.

The Kansas Association of Counties indicates that enactment of the bill could increase counties' allocations to conservation districts to meet the new match amount; however, a fiscal effect cannot be estimated.

Kansas Department of Agriculture; conservation districts; state match; funding