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Testimony before the House Elections Committee regarding HB 2314: changes to the lobbyist statutes

From: Ron Seeber, Sr. Vice President Government Affairs, Kansas Grain and Feed Association and
Chair, Kansas Society of Association Executives

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am Ron Seeber, Sr. Vice President Government Affairs of Kansas Grain and Feed Association. However, I appear here today filling the role of Chair, Kansas Society of Association Executives.

We support changes to current lobbyist statutes represented in HB 2314. On behalf of many in the lobbying community, we believe the law needs a few simple adjustments to a few of the thresholds we, as lobbyist, adhere to. This afternoon, a few of my colleagues and I will give a few examples of how HB 2314 makes reporting efficiencies for both lobbyists and the Ethics Commission office.

HB 2314 increases the amount you can provide for a state employee from \$25 to \$50. We have found instances where the state employee has had to reimburse the amount once it has passed over the threshold. Once beverages, appetizers, and other accompaniments are added to a bill, the \$25 threshold is easily breached.

The bill also provides that ground transportation for a legislator is not considered a gift. KGFA was planning a tour of several agribusiness facilities across the state. We cancelled the trip when we discovered such transportation would breach the gift limit. The bill should be amended to include travel for state employees as well.

HB 2314 also raises the limit exemption from reporting meals from \$2 to \$15. This is simply a cost of living adjustment reflecting increased food prices. We are not tied to the \$15 limit should the committee choose to adjust that amount.

A few of my fellow lobbyists have input on other provisions in the bill and I will defer to them. Also, I am pleased to take any questions at the appropriate time.