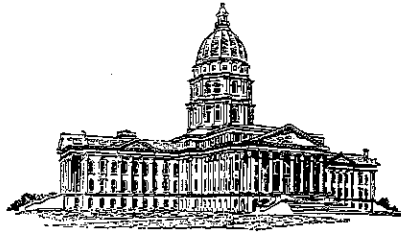


STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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DON SCHROEDER
DISTRICT 74

Re: HB 2375

Chairman Waymaster and Committee,

The Rural Opportunity Zone (ROZ) program was begun in 2012 at the urging of the Governor. It began with 50 counties, another 23 were added in 2013, and the final 4 in added in 2014 for a total of 77 counties out of 105 in Kansas. Of the 77 counties, 69 have participated in the student loan repayment program. The program requires some financial participation from the Counties as well.

In 2016 alone, 548 individuals qualified for the student loan repayment program. This helps slow the 'brain drain' by bringing some of the best and brightest to Kansas. Marion County, in my Legislative District #74, has benefitted largely because Tabor College is able to attract better instructors to an already outstanding Christian Liberal Arts curricula.

A motion in the Committee a couple weeks back took the ROZ money and shifted it to Enterprise Zones. While Enterprise Zones are good, it sets up something of a rural vs urban discussion. I would rather not take it there because the ROZ program is showing benefits. Granted, more in some areas of the State than in others. But for those benefitting, the cost is relatively small.

At the very least, current State obligations must be met in this program. That obligation is \$1.9M through 2021. The program budget is \$1.6M in FY 18 and \$2.1M for FY 19 with a County Match required. I would like to see the full budget request restored as per HB 2375 and have the Enterprise Zone discussion made on its own merits and not at the expense of the ROZ program.

Don Schroeder
District 74