



**To: Chairman Sloan
Members of the House Committee on Water & Environment**

**From: Darci Meese, Manager Legal/Government Relations
WaterOne (Water District No. 1 Johnson County)**

Date: February 9, 2017

RE: Opponent Testimony—HB 2272

On behalf of WaterOne, I am submitting opponent testimony on HB 2272. The intent of the bill to apply a science based approach to prioritizing water projects and initiatives is sound. The water issues faced in our State do require deliberate research and study to come up with sustainable solutions. However, the bill appears to create another level of bureaucracy that seems redundant to the existing Kansas Water Authority. Additionally, the level of detail in the bill describing the charge of the collaborative seems excessive for statutory language.

A better approach may be to re-examine the Water Authority as suggested by the Blue Ribbon Task Force, not just to evaluate contribution vs. representation, but also the charge of the Authority. Many of the agencies suggested as a part of the collaborative are already ex officio or full members of the Water Authority. Certainly many of the agencies and representatives attend Water Authority meetings in an advisory capacity. Possibly, through regulation, the Authority could be directed to carry out the studies and research listed in 2272 through the engagement of sub-committees or task forces, rather than creating a wholly separate body of bureaucracy. In considering the make-up of the Water Authority, the legislature should consider whether there are groups lacking representation. The Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) membership is one such group. It makes sense that the RAC's, as a whole, would have a seat at the table to represent the grass roots work that is occurring in each Region.

Another route to achieving the stated of goals of 2272 is to look to the Regional Advisory Committees. The RAC's are discussing retaining many of the University's for research support and coordinating efforts to obtain funding for such research and pilot projects. The Kansas RAC in particular has developed a structure for coordination of existing agencies and the RAC membership to do just what 2272 proposes—apply more of a science based and targeted approach to prioritizing projects that will benefit water resources in the Region. The RAC model goes further to help agencies tap into potential federal cost share programs for projects. Certainly funding of the Water Plan will be key to the success of the RAC's in carrying out this work, but engaging those directly impacted in finding solutions will be more effective than adding another layer of government to the process.

In summary, the intent of HB 2272 is valid, to apply more science and prioritization to the projects that are funded from the Water Plan Fund. The mode of achieving these goals is better handled through evaluation of the make-up and charge to the existing Water Authority and engagement of the RAC's.