



Testimony before the House Water & Environment Committee
By Erik Sartorius
Regarding House Bill 2513
January 30, 2018

The League of Kansas Municipalities appreciates the opportunity to appear before the committee on behalf of our members and Kansas Municipal Utilities. Residents across Kansas rely on approximately 1,100 public water supply systems and 525 municipal water utilities for safe, clean water every day.

In the past legislative session, the House and Senate looked to capitalize on the momentum developed with the creation of the Vision for the Future of Water in Kansas. The \$1.2 million appropriated for the State Water Plan Fund is a step in the right direction.

The League and KMU participated in the Blue Ribbon Water Funding Task Force in 2016. Stressed in several presentations was the partnership between fees for water consumption, fees on various agricultural inputs, and appropriations from the state to fund the State Water Plan. The state still falls far short in funding its statutory requirements for the State Water Plan. As most members know, the legislature is to provide \$6 million annually from the state general fund, as well as \$2 million appropriated annually from the Economic Development Initiatives Fund.

Again, this should be the first place the legislature looks when considering funding water issues. Our members cannot accept the state abdicating its responsibility in funding the State Water Plan. House Bill 2513 imposes new fees before the state meets its own commitments. The fees in HB 2513 go away if the legislature fulfills its \$8 million commitment for two consecutive years (which is unlikely), but then are reimposed when the legislature does not meet its statutorily-required commitment. In our members' eyes, this is a backwards approach.

The state's recognition of and adherence to its responsibility must come before the state heads down the road of fee increases. As was the case in the last session, we are uncomfortable with significant fee increases for cities. Such increases seem particularly unbalanced to cities when you consider that municipal uses of water make up no more than 15% of the water use in the state.

We agree that significant issues exist with both water quantity and quality in Kansas. A meeting we convened in December reiterated to us, however, that priorities and solutions vary greatly across the state. In HB 2513, for instance, several of the elements for which the new fees could be spent would have little to no benefit for some member cities. Others are moving forward with their own plans for necessary rate increases, and the fees within HB 2513 would compound their residents' increases.

While the League of Kansas Municipalities and Kansas Municipal Utilities do not support House Bill 2513, we appreciate that this committee has over the past two years taken seriously the water issues of the state. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you.