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Senate Ag & Natural Resources hearing on SB 405
2-13-18
Donn Teske testifying for Kansas Farmers Union.
Opposition testimony

Thank you Senator Kerschen, Ranking Minority Fransisco, for allowing me to testify here today in opposition to SB 405.

Kansas Farmers Union policy is clear in our opposition to industrial factory farming and I consider it amusing the referring to the contract growers for this industry in the role that they are family farmers, they don't even own the chickens, they are just the serfs. That said, I'm not as set in my opposition as I probably should be. I recognize that independent poultry is over, it's been chickenized, so the concept that if we can keep them out of Kansas we can create a cooperative system of supplying the poultry industry now just isn't going to happen. We might as well have another opportunity to market the grain that Kansas produces.

I figure that if a Kansas farmer is stupid enough to sign a contract that obligates them to all the financial and environmental risk while having no control of the input, genetics, management, or marketing on the other end pretty much deserve what they are going to get. Although I do acknowledge that the practice of investing a million bucks into infrastructure so that one is insured of having below-poverty income from the investment for the next ten years pretty much parallels what has been going on in agriculture in Kansas for years. Maybe it's in our DNA or something.

But what we are seriously opposed to is when Kansas bribes industrial Ag to come into the state like it appears they will be doing with the Tyson plant, and like they do with industrial dairies and doing that in the name of economic development. That isn't economic development, that is rural community killers. And to get more to the point we oppose our state government messing with the environmental regulations to be more enticing to this shameful industry. I'm told that if nothing is entered in the regulations the set-back distance is over 4,000 feet by law now for a farm of four broiler houses. And at the .03 proposed in SB 405 that will be reduced to the separation distance of 1,300 ft. I have no idea if these distances are accurate, yesterday I heard a whole hearing dodging that statistic, and also dodging where the science-based calculation of .003 as being the proper ratio came from. I'm also told by others that they think that there will be NO separation distance. That's kind of concerning. One would think these pretty simple questions would have pretty clear answers.

And what's really amusing is that there is SB 337 out there. Identical bill except for the ratio .005. So far no-one has been willing to tell me where the .005 calculation is derived from and why it has mysteriously faded away to be replaced by SB 405. It's pretty obvious that this little difference must be a big deal for all of Kansas Ag to pull out their heavyweights to testify in support and ramrod this "clarification bill" through at .003.

Seeing as how no-one can tell me from where the .005 OR the .003 was conceived from the redneck in me kind of likes the logic that 200 chickens per cow is better than 333 chickens per cow. If you are going to “clarify” this law, then I vote for .005.

It seems obvious to me that there is a lot of power flexing their muscle in this bill and Kansas is selling a little bit of its soul to lure them here.

That’s disappointing...

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