

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Senator Dan Kerschen, Chairman

From: Kent Askren, Kansas Farm Bureau

Date: February 17, 2020

Re: Written testimony in support of SCR 1614- supporting Kansas farmers in the Rattlesnake Creek subbasin

Chairman Kerschen and members of the Committee, on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SCR 1614. KFB is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 30,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau associations.

KFB member developed policy supports the Kansas Water Appropriation Act and the Groundwater Management District (GMD) Act. Our policy encourages voluntary, incentive-based programs to help alleviate the need for strict implementation of water rights priority which, in cases such as the Quivira Impairment, could lead to catastrophic hardship on individuals, communities and the state economy.

We have worked with KFB members, the GMD and state officials to provide input early on in this process to help identify lawful, effective and prudent remedies that provide a consistent supply of water to the Refuge while at the same time minimizing the economic hardship on farming families and communities.

Currently, negotiations are progressing between Big Bend GMD No. 5 and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the holder of the state authorized water right at Quivira Wildlife Refuge. Our Federal delegation has been extremely helpful in getting these parties to the table seeking mutually beneficial solutions to the Quivira water right impairment. Fortunately, abundant rainfall in 2019 caused significant runoff that filled the refuge marshes and satisfied their water right which, at least temporarily, defused the situation so that local, voluntary, collaborative and even-handed solutions can be negotiated.

We support Senate Concurrent Resolution 1614 and will continue to be engaged in promoting collaborative solutions derived from stakeholder driven management plans that are consistent with state water law. Such solutions are often costly and may require multiple agencies to work closely with the parties to help implement. Consequently, we call upon this legislative body to help oversee and promote solutions that result from ongoing party negotiations.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and we ask the Committee to favorably pass out SCR 1416.