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February 28, 2007

To: Senate Utilities Committee

RE: Senate Bill 20 Compromise

Chairman Emler and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Rural Water Association appreciates the work by the Senate Utilities Committee in previous hearings and developing a compromise on SB 20.

The Kansas Rural Water Association's board of directors, one member who is on the governing body of One Call, has repeatedly voted to oppose mandatory participation in Kansas One Call. This position is taken not because the Association is opposed to water or wastewater utilities locating their facilities, but instead, because many utilities have difficulty locating their facilities, and certainly not to within a 24" tolerance. It is our understanding that there are presently approximately 600 water systems that are not members of One Call.

We are frustrated to hear One Call state in a meeting at the KCC recently that they cannot narrow down a locate request to even one side of a 4-lane highway. Such lack of definition in turn causes locate requests to go out to adjoining properties and frequently, the locate request to the water system is to "mark entire property." It is not uncommon in rural water systems to be requested to mark all facilities in a quarter or half section of land. That's impractical. In order to narrow down the locate, the water system spends time finding the contractor to obtain a better description of the proposed work. Frequently out of state contractors will respond that they haven't even been issued work orders yet. While I have mentioned all these issues in SB 20 hearings, I think it is important to note that water systems which are not members of One Call are not experiencing damage to their pipelines. Water and wastewater utilities generally work directly with contractors, and vice-versa. We hope that the Committee will consider that because of the tolerance which One Call applies to issue locate requests, municipal and rural water systems are in cases inundated with requests. Each of those tickets has a direct charge but the One Call ticket charge is minor compared to the costs of sending personnel to investigate the request. In our view, the One Call process needs improvement. Adding 600 more water systems as clients isn't going to accomplish that.

For these reasons, the Kansas Rural Water Association continues to be opposed to mandatory participation by water and wastewater utilities in Kansas One Call.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elmer Ronnebaum".

Elmer Ronnebaum
General Manager

c: Board of Directors, Kansas Rural Water Association