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House of Representatives

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Steven C. Johnson  
Representative, 108th District

Chairman Kerschen and members of the committee:

My name is Steven Johnson and I serve as a member of the House of Representatives from the 108<sup>th</sup> district south and west of Salina.

I appear before you today as a proponent of Senate Bill 263.

My discussion and investigation of industrial hemp began at the water vision conference in October of 2014. There we speculated about whether industrial hemp, since it seems to grow most anywhere, might be a crop with a lower water requirement. The 2014 U.S. farm bill removed the requirement to obtain a DEA permit for departments of agriculture and research institutions to grow industrial hemp for research purposes. However, state law still prohibits the growing of hemp.

Through World War II it was a fairly prevalent crop in our state as well as across the nation. To know whether it would be viable in Kansas today, we began to discuss several questions, including:

What enforcement issues would we face?

While enforcement concern is limited in this first step of research, we don't want to invest significantly in research if we cannot move beyond it. Industrial hemp has tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content below .3%. This level makes it ineffective as a drug. The Department of Agriculture does have the technology to test THC content. I believe this is what is needed in our initial stages. We need to be very clear of who is able to transport and handle any plant material, but in limited tests done by the department and universities, this should be within our ability to oversee.

To go forward, we will need to develop technology, such as infrared images that can identify the difference in heat maps given off by plants of varying THC levels. This, combined with our states leadership in unmanned aerial vehicles could place us in a good position to monitor issues in our fields. Handling and transportation issues will also have to be studied to make sure differentiation is not an issue. Finally, the economics must be good enough to bear any cost of enforcement.

Summation:

If we want meaningfully different outcomes on issues such as economic development or water use, we will have to identify and explore meaningfully different opportunities. Industrial hemp may provide opportunities in agriculture, food, building, textiles, paper, polymer development, aviation, agricultural machinery and so many other areas where Kansas has or could have strengths. I hope you will join me in supporting SB 263.