

To: Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

From: Jim and Cathy Hoy
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Date: 13 March 2012

Topic: HB 2587 and Conservation Easements

As owners of the Flying H Ranch near Cassoday in Butler County, we wish to voice our strong support of conservation easements, both in principle and in practice. The philosophy underlying conservation easements is one of good land stewardship, particularly in protecting native grass, one of the great natural resources of our state. Ecologists have noted that the tallgrass prairie is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world, in far greater danger than rain forests. Placing conservation easements on prairie land means that that prairie will not be plowed or turned into housing developments; instead, it will be there for our grandchildren and for their grandchildren and for their grandchildren.

Some five years ago we placed a conservation easement on our ranch, reserving small carve-outs for the dwellings and outbuildings. We did this at no little financial sacrifice, for some of our ranch lies just across Kansas Highway 177 at the Cassoday exit from the Kansas Turnpike, and thus is prime real estate for commercial or housing development. But our commitment to leave an undisturbed Flint Hills landscape for future generations is stronger than our desire for a few extra dollars. Our wish to have conservation easements on our land is not detrimental to our neighbors; in fact, it will have the opposite effect.

When we voluntarily entered into our agreement with Ranchland Trust of Kansas, we did so with the full intent of having our land protected forever. We find the proposed legislation disturbing and inimical to our desire to preserve our patch of prairie. As our generation dies off, land, millions of dollars worth, that has been cared for by the good stewardship of Kansas ranchers and farmers is being inherited by offspring and relatives who no longer live in our state. Many of these new owners will have no connection to the land, no appreciation of our agricultural heritage. Conservation easements are one way that can help Kansas continue to look like Kansas far into the future.

We strongly urge that the laws concerning conservation easements not be changed. We want our land to be protected so that it will look in the future like it does today, and much like it did when my great-grandparents first settled there in the 1870s.

House Ag. & Natural Resources
March 14, 2012
Attachment 4