

Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas House of Representatives
The Honorable Larry Powell, Chairman
Testimony on HB 2587

March 14, 2012

Chairman Powell and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for providing me this opportunity to speak about HB 2587. I would like to share with the committee my involvement in the original conservation easement bill. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I represented the Kansas Audubon Council (KAC) as its legislative liaison. About 10 years ago, KAC became Audubon of Kansas (AOK). During the time I represented KAC, I was also one of the founding board members of the Kansas Land Trust.

The groups involved in advocating for the conservation easement bill were aware of several landowners who shared a common vision for the preservation of certain features of their property that they wanted to maintain forever. But at the time that mechanism was not available in Kansas. Thus the conservation easement bill was introduced and passed with bi-partisan efforts in both the Kansas Senate and House.

I specifically remember Mr. Thomas Aiken, who was the first grantor of a conservation easement on part of his property in Kansas. He was a kindly gentleman who was dedicated to preserving a small prairie in Douglas County in memory of his deceased wife, Dorothy, who had been active in 4-H and local garden clubs. The wildflowers that bloom on that prairie were among her favorite and it was Tom's desire to preserve them as a perpetual monument to her memory; thereby, ensuring a legacy for future generations of Douglas County children. Several non-profit groups regularly take kids out to that prairie so that they have the chance to learn about the biodiversity of prairies and have a notion of what pre-settlement Kansas was like.

I believe if Mr. Aiken were still alive, he would be distressed that his vision and wishes for Dorothy's prairie might be obliterated with the passage of HB 2587. He was thoroughly dedicated to having this patch of native prairie always remain intact and be protected from development. His love for the land should be honored and maintained.

I urge committee members to vote no on this amendment to the conservation easement statute.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

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