

March 12, 2012

To: Rep. Tom Moxley

From: Jerry and Patty Reece

Re: Kansas Bill 2587

Dear Tom:

As landowners in Wabaunsee County, we have donated conservation easements on two of our pastures (about 600 acres). Although we reside primarily in Johnson County, we spend as much time as possible at our home in Alma.

We bought land in the Flint Hills because we have always admired and loved it. We chose to donate conservation easements on our property to protect it from any kind of future development, to preserve the open landscape, and to assure that the ranching culture would continue there.

The appeal of the conservation easements was not just the tax advantage it held for us, but the knowledge that we would ensure the land would remain as it is forever – *forever*. That is a gift to those who come after us.

If Kansas Bill 2587 passes, it will take away the right to choose how to plan for our land's future. Individual property rights are a hot issue in any ranching community, and particularly in the state of Kansas.

We lease our pastures to cattlemen who derive part of their income from running their cattle on our land. We have come to know these men and many other ranchers in the area. They love their lifestyle – it's not just a job to them – it's their way of life.

Purchased easements provide an opportunity to ranchers to benefit from their most important asset without having to sell it. Many ranchers will tell you they are land-rich and cash-poor. By receiving payments from selling an easement, they loosen up some cash and are able to continue to earn money from their land, even expand their operations, or avoid foreclosure.

Easements also enable ranchers to make important long-term decisions about their land. It often enables the family to pass the land to the next generation. Children who do not wish to continue ranching can be given their share from the easement cash, and the land can then go to the children who want to continue ranching. The land doesn't have to be sold to "even everyone out." The land can remain in the family.

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The conservation easement program is not only important to our ranchers, it is equally important to the conservation of our natural resources in Kansas – easements are targeted at specific areas, preserving lands that have significant ecological importance – wildlife habitat, clean water, migratory routes for birds, tallgrass prairie that acts as a carbon sink and cleans the air – all those things that connect with each other to make a healthy planet for us to live on.

Please vote against Kansas Bill 2587. Tom, we thank you for your consideration and for all that you do in service to the Flint Hills.

Best regards,

Patty and Jerry Reece

2021 Brookwood Rd.

Shawnee Mission, KS 66208

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