



**Before the
Senate Select Committee on Education Finance
Written Testimony on SB 251
Gary Harshberger, Chairman, Kansas Water Authority
May 18, 2017**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 251, creating the Kansas school equity and enhancement act. My name is Gary Harshberger, and I am the Chairman of the Kansas Water Authority (KWA). The KWA opposes the bill, and specifically, the use of a water utility fee and water right fee to fund education. Should revenues raised from fees on water be used for anything but the following efforts, it would tie the hands of the KWA to respond to an ever-changing water resource and ensure a reliable, abundant water supply for the state of Kansas for future generations.

The Blue Ribbon Funding Task Force for Water Resource Management, which included diverse water users and stakeholders appointed by the Governor, was tasked with funding water projects and priorities in the future. The topic of a utility fee on electricity to fund water was discussed by the Task Force, and was opposed by the members because fees should support a service offered, not another un-related purpose. This sentiment is echoed in the KWA's comments here today.

In accordance with its statutory duty, the KWA is an advisor to the Governor and Legislature on water policy in Kansas, and has consistently advocated for projects and proposals which assist in the implementation of the Long Term Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas. These projects include those dealing with water conservation, additional sources of supply, technology and crop variety, and water management, and impact every citizen. Kansas' water future depends on the adequate funding of water resource needs, which vary greatly across the state.

Further, if a fee is imposed on water users or for water use at the state level, those fees should be dedicated to the State Water Plan Fund and used for priority water projects. Use of water fees for other purposes undermines the effort of citizens all across the state to ensure an adequate supply of good quality water for Kansas.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit written testimony on this legislation.