

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 2712

To begin with, I am a legal immigrant who came to this country 51 years ago. I am fortunate to have been allowed to take advantage of the unique opportunities this exceptional nation offered me. I got my education here, raised a family here, and succeeded in business well beyond expectation. Therefore, I understand why people from all over the world want to come to America to better their lives and provide for their families. We ought to welcome them as long as they observe our laws. Those who are here illegally are a different subject.

I strongly oppose HB 2712; it's a terrible bill, which should never leave this committee to come to the floor. To begin with, it's an amnesty bill. I listened with amusement to several proponents employing clever semantics and astonishing mental acrobatics to tell us it is not so. Let's see--people who came here illegally, stay here illegally, work illegally--will get documentation to allow them to stay permanently and have permission to work. What is that if not amnesty?

This is also a magnet to induce illegal immigration to Kansas. We can see the shifting of this population when droves of illegals left Alabama just a few weeks ago after a strong anti-illegal bill was passed. These folks would love to come to Kansas once word gets out that we will provide permits for permanent residence.

My main objection to HB 2712 is economic. We have 95,000 who are who are unemployed, and we propose, under this bill, to add competition for jobs. Native Kansas workers are hurt by every illegal that is holding a job. A post-audit report documents what should be obvious; illegal workers negatively affect wages. They drive down wages. A father of four, who used to make a good living as a roofer, has been unemployed for a year; the Mexican competition is too strong. This also proves a second problem, namely that illegals negatively affect job opportunities.

The argument that there is a shortage of workers in certain industries is nonpersuasive and also related to the two problems above. If you can make \$25,000 in a slaughterhouse for a disgusting and unpleasant job, which should be compensated at a higher rate? Let the worker set rates paid. An example might illustrate the point. Dickinson, ND, is a miserable place in the winter; there is nothing much to do, but you cannot rent a room in the city; in fact, they're building barracks for the overflow of workers coming in to work at \$75,000 jobs in the oil field. Let the slaughterhouse pay adequate wages, and workers will relocate.

Finally, this is an expensive bill that will burden Kansas taxpayers unnecessarily. We ought to consider insisting on e-verify. Without jobs, illegals will leave the state. This will allow the laws of economics to rule, leveling the playing field for the benefit of Kansas workers. I urge you to vote "no."

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Attachment 8