



Kansas Cooperative Council 2022-2023 Policy Guidance

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AGRICULTURE POLICY

Agri-chemical, Fertilizer, and Fuel Regulation

Regulation of agricultural chemicals, fertilizers and fuels should be based on sound scientific principles and applied evenly to dealers, handlers, and end-users. The KCC supports efforts to ensure that regulations for storing, handling, and applying fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and fuels are uniformly enforced.

Training/certification programs should help ensure the desired safety goals are met and should not create redundancies with similar training. Where appropriate, credit for similar training under one certification class should be recognized under complementary classifications. Chemical safety training materials should be up to date.

Agricultural Sustainability

The KCC supports a broad view of agricultural sustainability that embraces the use of technology, biotechnology and generally accepted agricultural practices for meeting the food, fiber, and fuel needs of a growing world population.

Cotton Production

Cotton production and ginning has increased significantly since 1996. Several infrastructure investments, including four cooperative gins and a warehouse, have extended the potential for the crop in the future. Cotton offers farmers a highly water-efficient crop to use in their rotation management. The KCC supports creating a program within the Kansas Department of Agriculture that can remove barriers for farmers to expand into the cotton market and encourages more research and development of this specialized crop.

Food Security, Safety and Traceability

Protecting our nation's food supply is a concern for the entire agriculture industry. Laws and regulations protecting commodity and food products, as well as our patron's privacy rights, must be reasonable, science-based, risk-based, economically balanced and workable in the everyday operations of agribusinesses.

We support the construction and operation of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Kansas. Our state is uniquely positioned in terms of expertise in animal and plant science, agricultural pursuits, existing research programs, public and private support for research activities and geographic location to serve as the host site for the NBAF.

Industrial Hemp

The Kansas Cooperative Council supports the legalization of industrial hemp as a crop for Kansas farmers struggling with low commodity prices and international trade conflicts. The KCC's position remains consistent with the federal guidelines granted in the 2018 Farm Bill and regulated by the Kansas Department of Agriculture. Further research is needed to determine industrial hemp's viability as a cash crop and ensuring

that a sustainable market and regulatory framework is in place for hemp to serve as a stable source of fiber, food, or fuel.

Kansas Agriculture Remediation Board (KARB)

The KCC supports the Kansas Agriculture Remediation Fund and encourages the continued existence of the fund, as well as the oversight administrative board. The fund has been able to assist in financing important remediation projects. We support increasing the cap on the dollar amount for reimbursement available to an individual site. The cap should be more reflective of the cost actually incurred to implement the remedial efforts.

The Kansas Dept. of Agriculture has a functionary role in collecting and dispersing KARB monies. We understand their administrative costs will increase if additional dollars flow into the fund and more applications are then processed. Thus, we support an appropriate mechanism for KDA to cover reasonable administrative costs and necessary inspections under the Fertilizer Inspection Program.

We support efforts to re-evaluate and amend the manner in which claims are prioritized.

We support increased consistency in recommendations from KDHE regarding clean-up requirements that transcend employee changes within the department.

We support efforts to restructure the revenue coming into the fund, so a more proportionate amount comes in from the fertilizer product registration fee rather than the grain warehouse license fee or the agricultural chemical product registration fee. We support maintaining a level of funding that will reasonably cover incoming requests, but not create large balances, becoming the target of budgetary sweeps.

Kansas Dept. of Agriculture (KDA)

The KCC supports a strong State Dept. of Agriculture and the continuation of the state grain warehousing program. KDA licensing and regulatory programs should be adequately staffed and funded.

Many of the Department's current programs rely heavily on fee funding. Several of these programs have seen fee increases in the past, including the grain warehousing program. The KCC realizes continuation of these fees is needed for many programs to continue.

Agricultural production is a major contributor to the Kansas economy. As such, programs like the grain inspection program, which ensure confidence in the ag economy need to receive state general fund (SGF) dollars. Any additional SGF funding for the program should be new dollars to the KDA and not just simply reallocated from other regulatory or licensing programs important to cooperatives.

The Council supports continuation of grain warehouse facility inspections. Such an inspection provides value as from a third-party perspective not only for the cooperative

but the producer, as well. The Council encourages the continued monitoring, by KDA and industry associations, of state vs. federal grain warehouse licensing issues, including potential fee differentials between the two programs. KCC members see value in having the choice between a state and federal licensing program and support the continued existence of both programs. In order to protect the stability of the state program, it is important to avoid placing the state program at a competitive disadvantage as compared to the federal program's fee structure.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Auditing Standards

We encourage the utilization of auditing standards for co-ops that recognize the fiscal oversight inherent in the cooperative business structure.

Business Continuity

The council does not support unnecessary regulatory oversight that impedes upon business continuity. As cooperatives, members govern through local control and appreciate the flexibility to manage their respective businesses to continue to meet the global food supply chain needs, member's energy needs and operate safely.

Cooperative Finance

The KCC supports the ability for cooperatively owned financial organizations, which are regulated, to grow and modify as their member-owners' needs change. We support continuation of current oversight and tax structures.

Cooperative Structure

The KCC supports the Kansas Cooperative Marketing Act. The cooperative model has evolved over generations. Still, the current Kansas Cooperative Marketing Act exemplifies what can be termed the modern, traditional cooperative structure.

Although the push toward a nation-wide Uniform Limited Cooperative Association Act, seems to have lost momentum, the KCC will continue to monitor legislative trends in cooperative law. An attempt to adopt the provisions of the proposed uniform act in total, in Kansas, would be still be approached with great caution by the KCC.

The KCC supports the Capper-Volstead act and would oppose initiatives that weaken the ability of farmers and ranchers to collectively market their products.

The Kansas Cooperative Council supports efforts to enhance cooperatives' participation in various business opportunities. Initiatives designed to foster cooperative enterprises should be available to traditional co-ops and not limited to non-traditional or "new generation" entities. Additionally, existing cooperatives forming new ventures should also qualify for incentive programs.

Kansas has enacted state authorizing legislation for marketing cooperatives, credit unions and electric and telephone utilities. The KCC supports these long-standing cooperative acts. The Council will oppose efforts to advance additional cooperative authorizing statutes that do not meet commonly accepted cooperative principles and do not require the newly created entity to do business on a cooperative basis.

Cybersecurity

Modern production agriculture uses smart technology in almost all aspects of farming and agribusiness. This increased automation and connectivity increases the risk of cyber-attacks on our food supply chain. The KCC supports initiatives where state and local governments can partner with the private sector to protect this important data, create a more robust cybersecurity workforce, and develop a statewide response plan to major cybercrimes.

Employee Misclassification

We support fair and honest treatment of employees. Intentionally misclassifying a person's employment status as an "independent contractor" rather than an "employee" in an effort to avoid paying benefits is inappropriate.

Mechanisms exist under current federal and state laws to punish those employers who intentionally misclassify employees. These enforcement tools should be utilized to their fullest extent to punish offending employers. Additional penalties should not be considered until we have sufficient data indicating significant problems still remain despite enforcement to the fullest extent of current provisions. Appropriate overseeing agencies must have adequate staffing to fully implement their oversight obligations.

It is important to preserve the true contractor to subcontractor relationship. Misclassification errors of a subcontractor should not be imputed back on a contractor.

Insurance

The Kansas Cooperative Council supports efforts to provide alternative insurance coverage to all Kansans outside of private employer-paid plans and the federal Affordable Care Act, so long as there are no negative unintended consequences to cooperatives and their members. The council supports reducing unnecessary fees and taxes associated with self-funded and AHP plans.

Risk Management

The Council recognizes the critical importance of risk management in the form of an effective and viable futures/option market for the benefit of individual producers and commercial handlers. The safety and integrity of such programs need to be safeguarded.

Workers' Compensation

Workers' Compensation costs in the agribusiness sector are a concern to the Council's members. The Kansas Cooperative Council will support efforts to slow the increase or reduce these costs to agribusinesses and reduce fraud within and abuse of the

Worker's Comp system. Consideration should be given to setting reasonable medical provider reimbursement rates (comparable to medical provider negotiated rates under health insurance plans) for services related to treating injuries under workers' compensation.

Workforce Development

A thriving and robust workforce is vital to the success of all industries in Kansas. Lack of willing and skilled employees is a top inhibitor to growth and expansion for many of our cooperatives and continues to be a primary concern of industry leaders across cooperative sectors. Production agriculture requires sufficient farm labor resources to continue to supply the nation and the world with high quality food, fiber, and fuel. Employment in the agriculture industry is a key component to strengthening the Kansas economy.

The KCC supports state programs and policies that lessen the barriers in recruiting, retaining, and training the next generation of agribusiness men and women. Jobs in these fields are vast, good-paying, and in demand.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Clean Water Act/Water Quality

Co-ops desire clean water and air and support reasonable policies to reach those goals. The Kansas Cooperative Council is concerned with efforts to broaden the scope of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and the US EPA's efforts to expand their authority under the CWA. In particular, we are opposed to the elimination of the word "navigable" when describing the waters under the jurisdiction of the CWA and EPA's efforts to expand their authority through interconnectivity to navigable waters. Further, we do not believe the original intent of the CWA was to extend EPA jurisdiction to every stream, seasonal stream, farm pond or similar body of water. The EPA and Army Corp of Engineers rule promulgated during President Obama's administration and commonly referred to as the "WOTUS Rule," is an aggressive overstepping of agency authority and we support efforts to invalidate the rule or prevent enforcement of the rule.

We support efforts to have the Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) label control application parameters for ag chemicals/applications falling under FIFRA jurisdiction. Duplicate permitting under Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) is unnecessary and often creates unnecessary burdens on those using crop protection products.

Over the past several years, Kansas has made significant strides in improving overall water quality in the state. We support a narrative approach like the Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment has implemented to guide the state's water quality programming.

We believe “working lands” programs are valuable tools for advancing environmental stewardship or addressing a variety of environmental goals. We support additional funding for working lands programs and caution against moving money away from such programs in favor of initiatives which take whole fields out of agriculture production.

County Home Rule Authority

The Kansas Cooperative Council supports the current statutory home rule authority for counties, including the existence of numerous limitations and exemptions in statute to their home rule grant of power. The KCC would oppose legislative efforts to grant counties the same constitutional home rule authority that cities possess. The KCC supports the uniform application of environmental and agricultural regulation in Kansas. Patch-work regulation that varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction is confusing for the regulated community and often leads to inefficiency in production, increasing costs for the industry.

Energy Policy

Recognizing the importance of energy production and usage to the Kansas economy, the KCC supports a balanced energy policy that provides regulatory certainty and considers cost to the consumer, reliability of service, and environmental stewardship. The KCC also supports initiatives which promote the development, use and promotion of economically viable renewable energy sources and energy innovation. Domestic consumption of fuel for agricultural use should always be given a priority.

We encourage the state to pursue grants and federal/state partnerships in furtherance of this policy, including the continued funding of the state portion of federal/state cost share initiatives under the Stafford Act (FEMA), providing disaster relief funding for eligible private non-profit entities, such as electric cooperatives, in the state budget.

Lawmakers should refrain from restructuring the electric industry unless all consumers, not just large consumers, benefit under a system free of temporary, artificial cost controls. Cooperatives must not be forced into a deregulated marketplace or mandated to divest generation. Any effort to cap electric rates must recognize cooperatives’ ability to self-regulate rates and exempt co-ops from the cap.

Environmental – Emissions Costs on Production Agriculture and Cooperatives

American farmers produce the safest, most abundant and most affordable food supply in the world. Our ability to produce food, fiber and fuel within our borders is essential to our national well-being and security.

The KCC opposes regulatory efforts that unnecessarily hamper farmers’, ranchers’ and cooperatives’ ability to produce and compete in the domestic and global marketplace, including:

- Unreasonable increases in taxes/fees based on emissions, including livestock emissions;

- Requiring changes in generally accepted animal husbandry procedures to alter greenhouse gas emissions;
- Limiting the use of manure as fertilizer or fuel feedstock;
- Requirements that unreasonably increase the cost of energy production or threaten reliability of service/supply;
- Establish standards that cannot realistically be met since affordable best available control technologies (BACT) or best management practices (BMPs) do not exist; and
- Air quality regulations that will unduly interfere with common, generally accepted agricultural practices and production methods, crop management, grain handling and rural living.

Irrigation Transition

We strongly support addressing conservation issues through working lands programs. Simply idling crop land is not the best overall mechanism for achieving many conservation goals. The working lands model is especially important for transitioning from irrigated to dryland agricultural production. Whether or not continued dryland production is allowed in a conservation/irrigation transition program is the critical factor in determining KCC support for such a program.

The process of designing irrigation reductions programs should include evaluation of the economic impacts of a conservation program. The analysis should include impacts on the local community, businesses and tax base.

The KCC continues to believe the reliance on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (CREP) to address irrigation reduction, where dryland farming is prohibited, can result in significant, long-lasting, negative economic impacts for a CREP region and the state. We urge the legislature to refrain from appropriating additional funding, beyond what is needed for fulfilling already negotiated CREP contracts, for a water quantity CREP. Alternatively, we encourage the development of water conservation programs that utilize reduced rate irrigation while maintaining the option for active ag production.

The KCC Board of Directors believes this issue is of critical interest to our membership. We will continue to be actively involved in monitoring, lobbying and educating our members, legislators and others as to the impacts irrigation transition programs may have. We actively support economic studies that provide additional information on the potential outcomes various transition programs might have.

GOVERNMENT

Agencies and Agency Consolidation

Appropriate steps should be taken to streamline government, improve efficiency and limit unnecessary growth in government. In evaluating agency restructuring, the

following should be considered (the list below is not reflective of any particular type of priority and is non-inclusive):

- Identifying where duplication of services exists;
- State's ability to carry-out statutory responsibilities and mandated regulatory programs;
- Impacts on stakeholders, including economic impacts;
- Comparison of initial cost of such a change vs. short and long-term savings to the state; and
- Whether or not the public will be better served, overall, by the change.

New agencies and programs should be designed with a sunset provision which requires an evaluation on performance.

We caution the state against automatically assuming centralized purchasing will generate overall savings. Doing business locally is an important component of maintaining vital economies across the state. Cooperative members and employees are local taxpayers and they understand the relationship between local tax dollars and government entity expenditures. They know if local agency expenses increase, their tax burden increases, so they understand the value of fair pricing in dealing with government entities. Additionally, especially in relationship to schools, cooperatives give generous contributions back to their local educational institutions. Any proposal to consolidate purchasing under a state or regional system should take all these considerations into account and should recognize that certain products, including electricity and fuels, do not lend themselves to a centralized delivery system.

Efficiency in Legislation

The Council encourages the legislature to be judicious in the number of bills introduced each session as a means of limiting the cost of government.

Fee Fund Integrity

The Council will work to ensure that fee dollars generated for specific programs are not diverted to non-program related activities. We caution agencies and urge them to establish fee limits that allow them to meet program requirements but avoid large fund balances that could become targets for budgetary "sweeping".

The Council supports efforts to increase accountability over fees as well as flexibility in program structures that allow agencies to maximize, or even leverage fee dollars, for the good of a program and its stakeholder community.

The KCC, under the current statutory framework, supports maintaining state water plan fees on industry at their current level. The state should meet their full statutorily required funding obligations. Consideration should be given to reducing existing fees if a shift in funding sources is implemented. Any revised funding structure for water projects or the SWPF must guarantee that monies are protected from diversion to other state programs and the most likely avenue for securing such protection is through an amendment to our state Constitution. The KCC recommends prioritization of projects within the SWPF.

Government Competition

We support efforts to reduce government competition with private business.

Immigration Reform

The Kansas Cooperative Council members seek to operate within the law, including when hiring workers. The KCC supports immigration reforms that help ensure our national security, while at the same time preserving farmers' and agribusinesses' ability to maintain and access an adequate workforce.

Reforms should not unduly shift the enforcement burden from government to the business sector.

Penalty provisions should balance the level of culpability with the level of harm resulting from an action/inaction. Penalties should only be imposed for intentional, deliberate violations where the employer had actual knowledge the action/inaction would run counter to the law.

The KCC supports reform efforts at the federal level and does not support efforts that would create conflicting immigration laws on a state by state basis.

Initiative and Referendum

Our United States of America was founded as a democratic republic, where citizens have the privilege and duty to elect those that will enact laws to govern our land. The state of Kansas is also founded on this same republican governance model. We support the continuation of this tried-and-true system of government and oppose efforts to diminish the safeguards inherent in the system through the introduction of a process for initiative/referendum.

Kansas Water Appropriations Act/Water Resource Management

We support the current general framework of the Kansas Water Appropriations Act, including the first-in-time/first-in-right priority system inherent in the general framework. We also support the preservation of rights of producers to be able to utilize groundwater for irrigation in an effort to create a sustainable resource for the ground water management districts. In doing so, we support the notion that water rights are individual property rights that must be recognized and protected in water conservation efforts.

We support multi-year flex accounts (MYFAs) as a tool for water resource management. Individuals re-enrolling their rights in the program for an additional term should be allowed to roll the unused allocations of those rights forward.

We support Local Enhanced Management Areas (LEMAs) provided each participant in the LEMA voluntarily enrolls his/her right(s). Forcing a right-holder to involuntarily reduce his/her allocation, even if the LEMA were approved by a majority of right holders in a designated area, would essentially function as a "taking" of a portion of the property right.

Kansas wisely regulates water quantity and water quality through separate statutory frameworks and separate agencies. This system has served the state well for many years and prevents the concentration of too much authority over this precious resource in one agency/individual. Opportunities may exist to improve coordination of water resource management and/or services to water users, but extreme care must be given to preserve the core separation of water quality and water quantity management.

We support the creation and or use of water banks as tools for increasing water management effectiveness.

Regulatory/Tort Reform

The KCC supports changes in the regulatory, administrative and judicial systems that eliminate unnecessary regulation or litigation, reduce predatory legal action, help control the cost of litigation, encourage business development, promote growth in the economy and reduce uncertainty within a regulated community.

Regulation of an entity/industry is most appropriately accomplished under statutory parameters and open rule making procedures where the regulated community has the opportunity to provide in-put and the various impacts on those regulated are sufficiently evaluated. Central to an open rulemaking process is providing a comment period that is sufficient for stakeholders to fully analyze a proposal and determine impacts on the regulated community. Actions taken to “protect” safety, public health, the environment or other general areas should be based on regulations/law founded on sound, scientific information, an informed rule making process, impacts on the regulated community, and the feasibility and possibility of compliance.

State OSHA Program

The businesses KCC members operate are highly regulated, and federal OSHA requirements apply to them. If it appears creation of a state level occupational safety and health administration would add additional regulation, duplicate governmental services, add additional costs to business or increase government bureaucracy, the Kansas Cooperative Council will not be supportive of creating such a program.

TAXATION

Local Property Tax Lid

We believe that the state’s high property taxes are a growing burden on Kansas businesses and families. The KCC supports current law that prohibits a city or county from increasing their annual budget above the rate of inflation without a vote of the governing body. This tax lid caps the amount of property taxes that can be collected or requires an equivalent reduction in the mill levy. Cooperatives believe in a balance of taxation that is equitable, while not negatively impacting our business viability.

Tax Exemptions and Incentives

Justifiable tax exemptions have been created for agriculture, agribusiness, credit unions, REC's, cooperatives and the general business community. The Kansas Cooperative Council supports retention of these exemptions and incentives in our state and federal tax codes. The KCC recognizes that elimination of an exemption essentially equals a new or additional tax. We support re-instating the state sales tax exemption for materials and supplies purchased for new construction or expansion of facilities, whether or not the project meets the requirements of the high-performance incentive program (HPIP).

Incentives designed to foster business development or investment in Kansas should not exclude cooperatively organized businesses. We support increased refundability of tax credits and/or the ability to transfer unused tax credits to subsidiary entities or member-owners that are themselves cooperatives or more than 50% producer-owned.

The KCC supports legal and tax law provisions that allow cooperatives to pass income through to member-owners, essentially facilitating single-taxation on income derived from patron business. We also support preserving IRS subchapter T treatment for cooperatives and the retention of the federal IRS Section 199 deduction for domestic production for agriculture, including the ability for co-ops to pass that through to members. We also support retaining the ability for cooperatives to deduct state/local property taxes paid on their federal income tax report.

Property Appraisal

The KCC supports uniform tax treatment on similar properties across the state. Guidance documents issued by the Property Valuation Division (PVD) of the Kansas Dept. of Revenue (KDOR) are valuable tools for county taxpayers, but only if they contain accurate data and reliable conclusions. The Council will seek accurate data in the Property Valuation guides for grain warehousing. Absent that, we will seek to eliminate the mandate that county appraisers follow tax appraisal guidance where we believe the guides are significantly flawed and the agency has been unwilling to make adequate adjustment to address our concerns.

The KCC supports valuing agricultural property on the basis of its inherent capacity to produce value/income. While we understand many complex properties were undervalued in recent years, sudden dramatic increases – some up to 700% in one year – are not reasonable. In those cases, it is important that our members have the right to due process when appealing their valuations to the Board of Tax Appeals (BOTA). We support any legislation that improves transparency and fairness in that process.

MISCELLANEOUS

Biotechnology/Technology Advances

The Council believes technological advances in plant and animal sciences or other scientific disciplines hold great potential for producers, agri-businesses, and consumers. For example, biotechnology advances in agricultural products and inputs may play a key role in sustaining agricultural practices that can have environmental benefits, increase production, and reduce certain input use. Additionally, biotechnology may allow greater productivity, and even profitability, in areas where crop/livestock production would otherwise be marginal. All of which can meet the growing global demands for higher quality nutrition.

The KCC supports biotechnology and technology advancements which can cost-effectively and practically enhance stewardship practices and conservation efforts.

"Check-off" Programs

KCC members currently collect and remit funds for various commodity promotion programs (checkoffs). Our members are not compensated for this work, nor are they able to recoup the administrative costs associated with the collection process. Our members do this as a service to the state, commodity promotion programs and the producers growing those commodities. We are concerned that creation of new promotion programs will increase burdens on our industry. As such, we are not supportive of expanding promotion/check-off programs that require our members to facilitate collection or remittance of an entirely new assessment.

The state should approach the creation of any new promotion program cautiously. Any new program must include reliable safeguards including adequate over-sight, annual financial audits by an independent auditor, annual reporting to the appropriate Kansas Senate and House committee of jurisdiction, and implementation only after approval by a majority of the state's producers engaged in that segment of the agricultural economy.

Commercial Truck Driver Regulations

Commercial truck drivers are essential in the safe and efficient transportation of agricultural commodities both in Kansas and across state lines. In recent years, the pool of willing and eligible commercial truck drivers has significantly been shrinking. In addition to having to work long seasonal hours, the federal Department of Transportation rules have made it harder for drivers to remain eligible for a CDL. The KCC supports reasonable and not overly burdensome state restrictions to obtaining a CDL.

Drones/Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)

The KCC supports the commercial use of unmanned aerial vehicles. We would oppose additional regulations that would make it more difficult for the use of UAV's in the agriculture and energy industries, as they have become a valuable tool in operation.

Kansas Railroad Leasing Act (KRLA)

The Council supports strengthening protections available to lessees under the Kansas Railroad Leasing Act (KRLA). Additional clarity is needed regarding railroad claims of ownership of improvements on leaseholds. We would support changes that prevent railroads from asserting ownership claims to an improvement to land the railroad did not directly pay for if such improvement was not listed on the rendition schedule No. 10a-1 or 10a-2 filed with the Kansas Dept. of Revenue-Division of Property Valuation prior to the enactment of the KRLA. For improvements so listed, we support requirements that the railroad inform the lessee in writing of the existence of claimed ownership interests.

Railroads should bear the burden of proving rates are reasonable. In cases where a court finds railroad lease rates to be unreasonable, attorney's fees, from inception of the challenge through appeal, should be awarded to the lessee. Automatic rent escalators should be considered per se unreasonable.

Medical Marijuana

Because the KCC supports the growing of industrial hemp as a crop alternative for Kansas farmers, we remain curious about expanding the cannabis plant's use for medicinal purposes. Much more research and coordination between the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and Kansas Department of Agriculture would be required to ensure a safely regulated, state medical marijuana program. Just one example of concern is the potential impact of herbicide and pesticide drift to marijuana grow houses from traditional agricultural crops.

Metal Thefts

The cooperative industry is concerned about metal thefts across Kansas and the damage done to property in commission of such thefts or attempted thefts. We support strong enforcement of our state's scrap metal laws aimed at preventing such crimes and enhancing penalties for those convicted of these offenses. Modifications to the act must be reasonable and not undermine the spirit of the act.

Propane Dealer Registration and Liability Protection

Safety is of paramount concern for propane dealers in Kansas. The Council supports licensing and registration programs that fulfill the requirements under Kansas law as a means of insuring that those delivering propane or performing work on any part of a propane system do so in a conscientious manner. We encourage the State Fire Marshall to recognize industry training that meets statutory and regulatory parameters as sufficient for licensing requirements.

The KCC also supports initiatives to limit liability for those meeting the registration and licensing requirements. These statutory protections in Kansas law must be maintained.

We support the existence of the propane advisory board and encourage prompt action to fill vacancies on the board when they occur. The board's scope of representation should encompass all major industry segments regulated under the propane act.

Telecommunications

Rural telecommunications providers, particularly cooperatives, are essential service providers for farmers and ranchers, cooperatives, other rural businesses. As such, proposals to expand or increase broadband services should support rural areas.

Transportation Funding

The Kansas Cooperative Council supports the adequate funding for a comprehensive state transportation plan and opposes state highway funds being used toward balancing the state budget or other government programs. Agribusiness cooperatives are particularly dependent upon reliable and safe roads and bridges to transport commodities across the state.

Truck Weight Limits

The KCC supports the modest, limited increase in maximum gross vehicle weight rates passed by the Kansas legislature in 2017. We support reasonably increased weight limits on federal roadways and across the state highway system and not just certain corridors, especially where that would promote greater uniformity with states in our region and improve efficiencies.