



**Kansas Natural
Resource Council**

**P. O. Box 2635
Topeka, KS 66601
www.knrc.ws**

February 6, 2008

Chairman Holmes and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is James Mason. I live in Wichita. I am Secretary of the Board of the Kansas Natural Resource Council, which since 1981 has been an advocate for clean water, progressive energy policy, protection of our environment, livable communities and sustainable economic development.

The bill we are discussing today would set an energy policy for the state of Kansas that points us in the wrong direction.

It is the overwhelming consensus of the scientific community worldwide that human-induced changes to the global climate are having an immediate, negative impact. The science is clear. If you add up all the fossil carbon - coal, oil and natural gas - that has been burned since the start of the Industrial Age, and adjust that figure by what has been removed by natural processes such as photosynthesis and absorption by the oceans, you get a match for the increase in CO₂ we see in our atmosphere today. We know the physical properties of how CO₂ behaves in the atmosphere. It reflects heat back to the earth, causing atmospheric temperature to go up. If we continue burning fossil fuels at a rate in excess of the ability of natural systems to take CO₂ back out of the air, the increase in global temperature will have drastic and very harmful effects.

Low lying coastal areas where hundreds of millions of people live are at risk of inundation from rising sea levels, which would cause tremendous hardship as these people attempt to relocate elsewhere. This is not just a third world problem. Many of the most populous cities in the United States are also on the coast.

Here in Kansas the most direct effect will be to agriculture. We are about evenly split between USDA zones 5 and 6. If global climate change is not arrested and reversed, the climate zones in North America are predicted to shift northwards bringing us the climate of the Texas panhandle and ending our long reputation as the "wheat state".

Dozens of states in our nation recognize the necessity to address this issue and are implementing policy changes to reduce their carbon emissions. Nations all over the world are grappling with this problem as well. It is an enormous problem, but therein lays enormous opportunities - especially for our state.

The transition to a post-carbon world is the great challenge of this century. Coal, oil and natural gas are all running out. We depend utterly on these resources, yet every day there is less to use, and every day it gets more expensive. Whoever can provide the renewable, non-polluting energy we need to move beyond a fossil fuel-based economy,

or the goods and services required to tap that energy, will not only be doing a great service to humanity and the Earth but will also thrive economically. Kansas has the potential to provide both renewable power AND those goods and services. We should seize this opportunity for the good of the planet as well as for our own self-interest. Building 1,400 MW of new coal-fired electric generating capacity is a big step in the wrong direction.

Another way to meet the challenge of reducing our carbon emissions while maintaining our standard of living is through energy efficiency improvements in our homes and businesses. This is the low-hanging fruit that we have only begun to harvest. There are features in the bill being debated that would improve efficiency of state buildings and operations, but for some reason the bill totally ignores the hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses across this state that could benefit from conservation retrofits. To that end, it is essential to develop an energy policy that enables utilities to aggressively implement demand management. Adequate financial tools are also necessary to assist ratepayers who cannot afford to make these investments on their own. If we get serious about energy conservation we can increase economic security for all Kansans and provide Main Street benefits for hardware stores, lumberyards and skilled craftsmen statewide. At the same time it will reduce our demand for energy, reduce our carbon footprint and also defer the need for new power plants. Yes, we can grow the economy by using less energy!

Adding insulation to walls and ceilings, replacing leaky, ill-fitting doors and windows with modern ones, replacing old clunker AC units with modern ultra-efficient ones - even something as simple as planting a shade tree on the west side of your house - all can knock down the demand for energy without reducing our quality of life in the least. In fact, these investments will actually improve our quality of life by making our homes and businesses more livable and holding down our monthly utility bills. Every study shows that making these investments is the cheapest and quickest way to meet short-term needs.

In the case of both renewable energy production and smart energy use, the economic benefits of implementing these choices will be felt all across the state. Western Kansas should rejoice, because they have an immense wind power resource which, if developed, will have economic benefits far beyond that of the proposed expansion of the Holcomb facility and which will not use a single drop of precious water from the aquifer.

The people of Kansas deserve a better energy policy than would result from this bill – a policy that seizes the opportunities presented by a post-carbon economy and enables smart use of the energy we consume. The people of Kansas deserve to have such a serious matter as state energy policy given full, thoughtful consideration by our legislature, not have it shoved out the door in haste. The people of Kansas have said in a recent poll that they approve of the decision to deny the Holcomb air permit by a margin of 2 to 1 and by a margin of 3 to 1 want to see our vast wind resource developed. The Kansas Natural Resource Council asks you, our legislators, to do the right thing and respect the will of the people. Please work with Governor Sebelius to put a progressive energy policy in place of this bill.