

Rep. Sloan Participates in Water Vision Workshop

April 14, 2014

Rep. Tom Sloan (R, Lawrence) participated in the Water Vision Workshop organized by the Kansas Water Office (KWO) and the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) as part of Governor Brownback's call to develop a 50-year Water Plan. More than 150 people involved in various aspects of water management and policy development from across the state participated in the workshop to hear what the KWO/KDA staff have heard about water policy priorities during previous public meetings. Megan Hiebert, Clinton Marina; Ann Purser, Clinton Nursery; Dave Corliss, City Manager; Sen. Marci Francisco; and Rep. Sloan represented the Lawrence/Douglas County community.

The range of ideas for state action ranged from encouraging water conservation, promotion of irrigation efficiency, and adoption of less water intensive crop varieties to expanding streambank stabilization programs, dredging drinking water supply lakes, and constructing a pipeline to carry Missouri River water to western Kansas farmers.

"In addition to suggesting some prioritization of the proposals made, I emphasized that having a plan without a funding source would result in another report on shelves collecting dust," said Sloan. "It is important to build public support across the state for a comprehensive action plan that recognizes that the plan for NE Kansas will not be the same as in SW Kansas. It is equally important to publicly discuss how such regional or local plans will be funded. Possible funding sources were noticeably absent from the discussions at the Workshop."

The KWO and KDA staff will integrate the information they received from the Water Vision Workshop with the information the previously collected from approximately 7,000 Kansans and develop a plan to submit to Governor Brownback this fall. That plan will also be provided to Kansans for further comment and refinement with the expectation that the Kansas Legislature will take action in 2015.

"The current cost of water does not reflect its value to us," Sloan said. "We drink and bathe in it; we water yards, crops, and livestock; we use it in manufacturing processes; affordable, clean water will define our state's future. Ultimately, the funding for a comprehensive water plan will affect residential, commercial/industrial, agriculture, and recreation interests."

Rep. Sloan is Chairman of the Vision 2020 Committee and a member of the Agriculture & Natural Resources and Transportation Committees. He has organized several Water Policy Summits involving state agencies, the Corps of Engineers, and other federal agencies, as well as representatives of consumer and environmental groups.

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