



Testimony in Favor of SCR 1618
Presented to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
By: Jeff Thorpe
February 20, 2014

Chairman Ostmeyer and honorable committee members,

I am appearing on behalf of the Travel Industry Association of Kansas (TIAK) as a current member and recently retired from its board of directors, and in my capacity as president of The Mariah Fund, a private foundation in Dodge City, Kansas created in 2009 for the exclusive purpose of granting funds to non-profits in Southwest Kansas for the preservation and presentation of our western heritage and tourism entities. Since inception, Mariah Fund has granted about \$450,000 in support of 41 tourism projects creating an investment \$1.6 Million in Southwest Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and to express our support for SCR 1618.

The Kansas constitution currently prohibits the operation of lotteries except for specifically authorized lotteries. A raffle is a lottery and is illegal under current law. As of 2012, Kansas is one of only five (5) States that does not provide a specific exemption for the conduct of charitable raffles. As introduced, SCR-1618 proposes to amend Article 15 of the Kansas Constitution and allow the legislature to authorize charitable raffles by nonprofit organizations and to define what constitutes a charitable raffle.

TIAK and Mariah Fund strongly support the proposed change set out in SCR 1618 because our communities recognize the importance of charitable raffles as being a centerpiece of fund raising for community and social needs. In fact, the burden of those needs could never be met without the generous support that a simple raffle brings to programs in need.

Our youth organizations, like 4-H, high school bands, churches, fire departments and senior citizen centers across Kansas need a way to raise money. They had to stop using these fundraisers like drawings for quilts or a side-of-beef when the enforcement of illegal raffles became a concern. I urge you and this Committee and all legislators to support SCR-1618. The Kansas voters are ready to mark their ballots for this meaningful need.