

LANCE JOHNSON 3RD DISTRICT IN McHENRY COUNTY.

CHAIRMAN BEKKEDAHL AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS. I AM HERE TO TESTIFY IN FAVOR OF SB 2151. MY COUNTY AND OTHERS SO DESPERATELY NEED THIS BILL FOR BRIDGE REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT. WE HAVE 97 BRIDGES IN OUR COUNTY. THE MOUSE RIVER RUNS THROUGH THE COUNTY AND ALL THE WATER IN THE WATER SHED COMES THROUGH RENVILLE AND WARD THEN THROUGH US AND GOES NORTH THROUGH BOTTINEAU. WE HAVE FOURTEEN OTHER CREEKS, AND RIVERS, PLUS DRAINAGES THAT FEED THE RIVER.

RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE FIVE BRIDGES CLOSED AND FIFTY THAT ARE DEFICIENT FOR WEIGHT. WE REPLACED THREE LAST YEAR. THIS DEPLETED OUR FUNDS FOR MORE BRIDGES TILL MORE FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH FEDERAL BRIDGE AND STATE FUNDS. LAST BIENNEUM A SIMILAR BILL WAS INTRODUCED AND WHEN IT WAS ALL SAID AND DONE, WE RECEIVED \$237,000.00 WHICH ONLY REPLACED SOME STEEL CULVERTS. WE DESPERATELY NEED AROUND FIVE MILLION TO GET SOME OF THE CLOSED BRIDGES REOPENED. THESE BRIDGES ARE CRITICAL TO HEALTH AND SAFETY IN OUR COUNTY SO FIRE AND EMS SERVICES CAN GET THERE TIMELY. GETTING BRIDGES OUT FOR BIDDING TAKES TIME AND FIRMS TO DO THESE ARE HARD TO FIND. THE WORKFORCE IS NOT OUT THERE. WE DO NOT HAVE A DEDICATED BRIDGE CREW TO EVEN DO MAINTENANCE ON THE BRIDGES RIGHT NOW. WE ARE ASKING FOR OUR HIGHWAY FUNDS TO BE USED FOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT. THIS IS PUTTING PAVED ROAD UPKEEP ON HOLD.

WE ARE A LARGE POOR COUNTY WITH THIRTY THOUSAND ACRE REFUGE AND A LARGE AMOUNT OF STATE OWNED LAND 6,345 ACRES. WHICH WE GET SOME PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES BUT NOT WHAT OWNERSHIP WOULD PRODUCE. OUR POPULATION IS UNDER 6,000 PEOPLE. NOT MUCH INDUSTRY AND ONLY A HAND FULL OF PRODUCING OIL WELLS. OUR ROAD AND BRIDGE MILLS ARE AT MAXIMUM AND NOT BRINGING IN THE REQUIRED MONEY THAT WE NEED.

PLEASE CONSIDER THIS BILL IN ITS ENTIRETY. THANK YOU.