Note: The recorded interview of Kathleen Sebelius by Rex Buchanan, from which this transcript was made, was conducted on January 18, 2023, at the Lied Center in Lawrence Kansas. Portions of this interview were included in Prairie Hollow Productions' documentary *Hot Times in the Heartland* produced by Dave Kendall in 2024. The Kansas Oral History Project, Inc. (KOHP) is grateful to former Governor Sebelius, Rex Buchanan, and Dave Kendall for granting permission to include this interview in the KOHP Energy & Environment collection of oral histories.

Transcript

Rex Buchanan: Let's go ahead and start.

Kathleen Sebelius: OK.

RB: Really what started this, I was talking to Joe Harkins, I did an interview with him for that Kansas Oral History Project, . . .

KS: Oh nice.

RB: . . . and when Joe got done, he said that he thought you were to energy [policy] sort of what Mike Hayden had been to water [policy]. I never really thought of it that way before, and the more I thought about it, the more I thought, there's something to what Joe has said here. I hadn't thought of it quite that way. So that's why I told Dave [Kendall] I thought it would be good to visit with you. We'll probably focus mainly on interviewing the climate issues here. Did you come into with, in terms of your period as public service – you're associated with insurance, obviously – was energy an issue that was on your radar at that time, or how did that evolve?

KS: Well, it really wasn't on my radar. During my time in the Legislature, I really focused on, I would say, maternal and early childhood issues. I was on the [House] Insurance Committee, I chaired [House] Federal and State [Affairs Committee], so gaming issues, and as we called it, the "sin committee." All the Tribal [gaming] compacts. But never did I work on energy issues or frankly know much about them. I knew friends who knew a lot and I followed their lead in terms of votes. That wasn't in any way, shape,

or form in the portfolio of the Insurance Commissioner's Office. So again, I did deeper dives on health care and other areas, but not that.

So, it wasn't really until I got to the Governor's office, and I would say kind of came in a bit by the back door, where I think the first projects that really involved alternative energy from the start was trying to save the Tall Grass Prairie, the park that [U.S. Senator] Nancy Kassebaum and [Congressman] Dan Glickman had brought into the federal system as partners. The foundation had always been a little shaky because there wasn't a funding stream, and we were very worried that some of the folks who had the land were actually going to split it up and develop it. And saving that piece of prairie became a project [through which] I began to learn about, wind energy and natural preservation and the concerns that local ranchers and farmers had about land preservation. But also, they didn't really want windfarms located up and down their prairie views. So that led to discussions with a lot of utility companies about what the wind potential was in Kansas, where we could locate wind, and [we] began to work on a voluntary collaborative saying, "OK, if you would look at natural boundaries -- where roads have already been plotted, where there are utility lines, staying away from this pristine stretch of prairie, I could, I think, convince land owners not to sue you and tie up these projects forever. We could advance." So those discussions began. But Joe Harkins was a part of my cabinet apparatus and he knew a lot about this and Mike Hayden, was the Secretary of Wildlife and Parks. Between the two of them, they were the best natural resource experts I could possibly have as teachers and mentors and really guides as we got into water, energy, natural energy that I knew very little about but luckily I was surrounded by people who knew a lot.

RB: So, in some respects, you sort of had that issue thrust upon you as opposed to going out and seeking it as an issue yourself.

KS: I think that's fair to say in my first term. And then Mark Parkinson became my Lieutenant Governor, second term, when I ran for reelection in 2006. We had discussed what he wanted to do. My first Lieutenant Governor, John Moore, had wanted to run the Department of Commerce in addition to being Lieutenant Governor, which really doesn't have a portfolio. You can kind of make it up as you go along. Mark made it very clear that if we won, he didn't want to run a department, but he wanted to work on energy and renewable energy issues. He knew a lot about it, he cared a lot about it. So again, he became a very up close and personal teacher, mentor, as we looked at these possibilities. Then in 2007, after the reelect was successful, came the request for the Holcomb coal plant. Another coal plant in Kansas to be built.

RB: Let's go back to the wind power issue. Lee Allison, who I worked with some in that process too -- I know he was involved in that somewhat. Was the driving force there more Flint Hills preservation and renewable energy? Did climate change enter into that conversation? Was it ancillary? How much did it drive this thing?

KS: I'm not sure that terminology was very widely used at all. What was recognized was that Kansas had this amazing natural resource. And that wind, I remember the quote I used over and over and over again, that "Kansas is the third windiest place in the country," and I would say, "even when the legislature's not in session" and it would always draw a big laugh. But what I found very quickly is that Kansans knew a lot and cared a lot about preservation of natural resources. We were one of the sunniest places in the country, ideal for solar – although that's really never taken off here. But wind seemed to be a very natural fit for Kansans. And I think farmers saw it as a great fit. It didn't, you know, spoil the land. It could work very well in farming areas where they needed additional sources of income. It didn't require extra water, you didn't have to irrigate, you didn't have to buy. . . So, it was a resource, an asset that was really untapped. But I don't remember talks about climate change. I do remember talks as we

got into the coal issue that involved pollution and in that way climate. The air that you breathe and could make you sick, and learning that Kansas had already the tenth highest per capita carbon footprint in the country, and we didn't need any of the energy that was being promoted as a part of the Holcomb plant. We had plenty of resources in Kansas that Holcomb was going to be built to ship all of the energy to other states, principally Colorado. But we would have the carbon in our air. In that way it seemed like a really bad trade to me, where we get additional carbon, we're already very significantly carbon heavy footprint. And the discussion about carbon credits and getting pollutants out of the air had really begun to take some hold on the national level. People were looking at ways that energy overall could be greener, that you could encourage businesses and consumers to look at greener alternatives. And here we would be, actually, in Kansas kind of doubling down on coal at a time where we didn't need the energy and we already were carbon heavy.

RB: One last thing about the wind issue and then we'll come back to Holcomb. So here we are however, 10 or 15 years later, in effect that moratorium has held, even though it has no legal force. Are you surprised that it's still in place?

KS: I'm sort of shocked. But I think again, what the Legislature was resistant to do was put a mandate in place. We presented maps and again, Mike Hayden and Joe [Harkins] were very involved in this. And Joe went out and did a series of community meetings throughout the Flint Hills areas, throughout the heart of the Flint Hills and surrounding communities about what this would mean and where the lines could be. The debates were pretty interesting because in some cases the local communities often felt they were being penalized if they were within the area where wind farms were prohibited. Some of the, I would say, leisure ranchers who had a second home or an investment in the Flint Hills were unhappy that the lines weren't more broadly drawn, that their ranch was not protected in the same way. But what was clear was that if we could find a way to put some of the economic benefits of the wind farms back into

the communities within the borders of the prohibited areas and satisfy the external ranchers that there were already roads, there were already utility lines, you know, this wasn't going to produce any new detriment to pristine land. It was already plowed and developed. We got an understanding, and I think legislators very quickly who didn't want to pass a mandate, but also kind of had the buy in of their local constituents too, this makes sense.

RB: So as a public policy instrument, it's pretty unusual. I mean, it really is. In the natural resource world it typically doesn't work that well.

KS: It's very unusual and we put this kind of, if you will, voluntary agreement on top of leases that in many cases had already been signed. The wind, energy companies were well ahead of us and had gone and signed up farmers and ranchers all throughout this area and there could have been a proliferation of wind farms. What was very clear though was we had some deep pockets who were some of the I would say leisure ranchers, farmers, who made it clear, they were willing to use their resources and tie these projects up for decades in court. So, if indeed the boundaries that had been drawn were not honored by the energy companies, they would never ever have a wind farm anywhere in Kansas. They became the enforcers, even though some of them weren't as I say pleased that the boundaries weren't broader, they made it very clear they were willing to, they didn't have anything else to do, they had plenty of money, and, you know, come on, put up a turbine and we'll see you in court.

RB: Let's see where this goes.

KS: You bet.

RB: Scott Ritchie was one of those kind of guys that I knew pretty well that had a lot of those feelings. So then to go to Holcomb. Did that evolve as an issue for you, or did it just come there and it was pretty clear what position you were going to take, considering the timing and the fact that climate change and carbon emissions by now really are front and center with almost everybody?

KS: Well, a bit of both, I would say. I did not even understand, frankly, that in order to build a coal plant, because I'd never been around when coal plants were being built, certainly not in the Governor's office, that the [Kansas] Department of Health and Environment played a role in certifying and authorizing the permit. Things like that were not on my radar screen until there was actually a permit request that came forward. Rod Bremby was the Secretary of Health and Environment in my cabinet, and he was an enormously thoughtful smart guy who also was very aware of this tension between what his duties were as kind of public health officer and the notion that [if the permit was approved] you would have a coal plant, an additional coal plant in Kansas. Not to warm people or make sure that hospitals had enough energy or any other number of things that could fit in the portfolio of making life better, but really to make a profit to ship energy someplace else and then have all of the pollutants remain in the air in Kansas. So, I think he quickly saw the tension. And what we began to talk about, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Secretary, and I [was that] I did not have the authority to order him. I mean, he had to go through a series of hearings and look at the jurisdiction that was in the law and look at what he was allowed to do. And I think he really wanted to make sure that if he indeed decided to turn down the permit that he would have the support of his boss – and I was his boss – but he discovered in the statutory authority that he could turn down an apparatus, turn down a permit based on the health of Kansans, and based on evidence that additional carbon in the air in the state of Kansas would lead to more children having asthma, lead to COPD victims would have, struggle with that. There were clear associations between how much carbon was in the air and health, and that that was clearly within his jurisdiction. The problem was and the issue that he brought to my attention was that nobody had ever done this. Not only nobody in Kansas, nobody in the country had ever used what was pretty similar language in state laws around the country, but nobody'd ever used that as a rationale to actually stop a coal plant. Not at the national level, and not at the state level.

RB: I went to a seminar at the KU Law School about that statute and his use of that statute and it is a little bit of an audacious move to use that statute to do what he did. I understand it, but whether or not it really would have held up through the entire legal process would have been real interesting to find out.

KS: Actually, to that point, it was years later. . . The [U.S.] Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). . . It would stand up now, because finally the EPA, I think eight years after he did that in Kansas, the EPA actually declared that carbon harmed the health of individuals. But he was a little prescient in that move.

RB: In some respects that was almost an eastern Kansas versus western Kansas fight. Don't you think? I mean, a lot of the support for that was coming from Garden City area, local belief in economic impact from construction, that sort of thing.

KS: Well, I'm not even sure it was that clearly geographically delineated. The president of the Senate, Steve Morris, lived in the area where the plant was going to be built [Hugoton]. It was his Senate district. The Speaker of the House [Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls] also was in the area where the plant… So, you had the two legislative leaders, with a pretty significant Republican majority, both of whom where leading constituents who very much wanted this to happen, so there was a definite hometown interest, and they commanded both the House and the Senate. There also was just a notion that economic development was good for the state and, you know, I was known as a Business Democrat. I liked economic development, I promoted a lot of projects in a lot of places, so that was seen as something that probably we could all work on together. Since no one had ever really raised the tension, and it wasn't a very active debate. There wasn't a, there weren't bills in the legislature mandating clean energy. There weren't disputes. The EPA was regarded as some evil Washington force which periodically would come to the state and tell people what they had to do, and nobody liked the EPA. So, there wasn't I don't even think a sense that in Kansas we would begin this battle. The battle was engaged I think after the permit was

requested and education began. There was a group called PACE and Scott Allegrucci and others were very involved, and it was a broad-based, activist coalition that did a pretty amazing job beginning to educate Kansans about what this fight was about. And what we found early on, what PACE found early on, is people didn't know a lot. As I say, climate change was not a familiar terminology. Even the notion that air pollution directly affected your health wasn't familiar. But a lot of education was done about those connections. If you have another coal plant in Kansas, it will mean that your grandchildren could get sick, that they may have asthma and not be able to thrive as well as they would with cleaner air. If we do this, this portion of the population will… I mean, it made very direct connections between what was going on with air quality and what was happening with the health of the people. And then made a corollary argument that we have this possibility of dirtier air and more unclean air and more carbon in the air or this amazing natural resource which is available, which could benefit some of the same communities and constituencies which will bring economic development. We could be a leader and it's an asset that doesn't harm anybody and actually could add to the benefit of the state. So, they had the opportunity to both do education on the dangers of the carbon issue, but also the real merits of pursuing a clean energy initiative.

RB: When you look back on that now, do you feel vindicated? I mean, the thing was never built, obviously. It could have been, but it wasn't. Natural gas kind of displaced everything [as a fuel source]. Here we are today. Nobody builds coal-powered plants in this country anymore. Do you feel vindicated, as you look back on it?

KS: I don't know if I ever felt unvindicated. I mean, it was definitely a battle I was willing to engage in. I didn't know how much on the cutting edge we were until, I remember, after I made the decision and upheld Rod's decision and then the legislature tried to pass a bill forcing Rod to issue a permit. I vetoed the bill; we went through that a couple of times. And then Rod and I were invited to an environmental

conference at Yale. It really took getting out of the State of Kansas and into a different place and I remember Rod Bremby being greeted as kind of the visiting hero, because nobody had ever thought about using the jurisdiction in a Department of Health and Environment. Nobody had ever issued a decision like that. No one had… And it was at that point that I thought, wow, this is something. I mean, we really figured out something here. And that felt pretty good. I mean, that felt like a vindication, as opposed to this. Because in Kansas it was a pitched battle and it was very bitterly fought and it was seen as I was siding with eastern, I'm happy to approve projects in eastern Kansas but I was going to let western Kansas go to hell. This was their only salvation and now this was down the tubes. That felt very… It was bitter. I didn't feel it was a very fair characterization, but it was made anyway.

RB: I did a field trip with John Peck from Law School out to Garden City in that process. We went to Holcomb and when I told the engineer at the plant I was from Lawrence, it did not go over well, trust me.

KS: Well, yeah. It was pretty bitter.

RB: In your time, then, as [U.S. Department of] Health and Human Services Secretary, does climate change enter in the conversations much at that point?

KS: Climate change was definitely starting to be much more. So, I went to the Department in 2009. Our battle on Holcomb was really, it was 2007, 2008. It was still underway in 2009 and Mark Parkinson kind of inherited it. But the plant never got built, luckily. But I came to Washington. Certainly, the EPA was much more active and engaged and beginning to look at all of the climate issues. I worked closely with Lisa Jackson, who was the head of the EPA, on the connection between public health and the EPA on a very kind of personal basis. Her son was a serious child asthmatic, and she could make the direct correlation between what was going on with both air pollution, indoor smoking, and various things that really affected health. We worked with the head of the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development] on I would say impact of — "climate issues" sounds pretty global — but it was really translated to what's going on with the air, what kind of water do you drink. Again, the discussion that the climate is beginning to change, that we're impacting it with these pollutants we're sending into the air, we've got holes in the ozone [layer]. I mean, that discussion, I think, was beginning to get traction but there still wasn't a direct line between that discussion, the atmospheric discussion of climate change, and what was happening to people's everyday lives.

RB: It didn't really drive directly in a lot of day-to-day issues that you were . . .

KS: That's right. I think what drove it was more that there was definitely a connection between climate issues and health. But not nearly to the level that we're looking at today. The forced migration of millions of people who are being displaced by climate, that kind of uptick in storms, the droughts that people are experiencing. Those issues were not nearly as prominent. I was there through 2014, and I would say, that was again beginning to… The Sandy Hook hurricane had some definite climate change aspects. People were talking about seeing things that they hadn't seen before in terms of just water levels and frequency of storms. But that was at the end of my term there, not really as part of what I inherited coming in.

RB: As sort of a long-term Kansan and observer of the state, so now we're in 2023, how do you feel like the state is responding to climate change now? In some respects, the visibility of the impacts of it that I think is a little more apparent – of the things you just talked about – it's apparent that it affects Kansans. How is Kansas doing along these lines?

KS: Well, I would say we're doing pretty well on the energy side, using the resources that we have. I think the last time I saw about a third of the power in Kansas is generated with natural sources. And that's without any kind of mandated renewable energy standard. That's remarkable, I mean, just remarkable. So that piece of the puzzle I think has worked. What I think has not worked as well and we haven't paid enough attention to and is looming as the most serious crisis we will have in the state is our conservation

and cultivation of new water resources. It's something that we tried to tackle. In some ways I … former Governor Mike Hayden who was part of my cabinet is one of the most, I think, internationally renowned sources in water and water knowledge and he did his damndest traveling around the state trying to educate, trying to talk, doing lots of informing people about what the consequences would be of continuing to irrigate at the level we were irrigating. Continuing to turn what is basically arid land into lush farming resources and using, at that point, at least about 80% of the Kansas water for irrigation and as the eastern part of the state was growing. And as the weather has really exacerbated that situation, I think we're now at a real crisis because nothing has been done in that side of the resource house to really look out to the future. We're now at a crisis.

RB: One of the things that your administration did, and it might have been you and it might have been Mike [Hayden], was create that Water subcabinet that brought those people together.

KS: Yes.

RB: I can tell you from an agency perspective that was really huge and I was really sorry when that went away because that was one of the more effective water coordination efforts I'd ever seen in all the years I was here.

KS: Well, Mike really led that effort and suggested that we put all the interested parties at the table. We actually not only had discussions but had a kind of joint budget that people would kind of come forward with a water budget. So, each of the agencies who had a piece of the puzzle had pre-discussions and came in with an agreed upon level. I mean, that was unheard of. In some ways legislators were kind of ticked off because it's like, well we like to do these one at a time. This committee has jurisdiction over this and it was like, nope, that's not going to work this time. They each had very common front, very unified. It is a shame that it went away. I think that was seen as something that wasn't needed, which gives, again, an example of how short-sighted the vision of the water issue has been in this state. With

the changes over the last number of years, and there have been dramatic changes, we are in really serious trouble as you look toward the future.

RB: In some respects, I hadn't really thought about this before, but in terms of the process of public policy with things like that subcabinet or that voluntary moratorium for wind farms, it's the machinery of government that in some respects is really interesting here that's put to work in some different ways in this process.

KS: Well, it is, but I think I would say the common theme is first, agreement, and some sort of vision of the leadership and willingness to tackle challenges. I mean, this is not "we're going to do what they've always done." I mean, these are tough issues and there are going to be competing sides and having some leaders who say, OK, we think this is the right way. We think we got to stop doing things this way. But then going out and getting buy-in, getting some support, getting some activity, and figuring out how to enforce that. I think the Legislature unfortunately is not a good enforcer obviously because they don't like big challenges. It's a 90-day hit and the last thing they want particularly is to tick people off who they represent. So, they'd rather avoid it. I mean, we're not going to ever close a school, we don't want to consolidate a government, we're not going to tackle energy issues, god knows we're not going to talk about irrigation. I mean, any number of things. So, unless you can find some really voluntary mechanism outside of the legislative process probably led by some of the cabinet leaders and the Governor, but may not have the legislative buy-in, it's not ever going to work. I don't think.

RB: I heard somebody once say that Kansans won't do anything you tell them to do, but they'll do almost anything you ask them to do.

KS: Well, and I think that's a very good point. Education and making it very personal. What is it. I mean, most people would say, 1200 jobs coming to the Holcomb plant, why wouldn't we want 1200 jobs in western Kansas? Then you kind of begin to break that down, well, it's really going to be like 150 full-time

jobs, there may be 1200 people moving in and out to build this, but that's a one-shot deal. And here's what you're going to have as a lasting legacy and here's what that means and here's what it means to your family, and it's like, oh, well that doesn't make a lot of sense. But that takes a while, and it takes a step-by-step process and it takes some willingness to again counter skepticism and put up some fights. We have a legislature right now that doesn't really represent where the population is but is drawn in such a way that there's an overabundance of western Kansas representation and I'd say an underrepresentation from eastern Kansas. If you put this to a vote of the people, if you said to Kansans, all right, do you want to deplete the water resources available to the entire state of Kansas by continuing to use this much for irrigation, drain every drop coming in from the Colorado River, do this and that. I think overwhelmingly the vote would be no, and it would come from the 8, 10, 15 counties east of Highway 69 [Reviewer note: the reference is to Highway 81 in the center of the state rather than to Highway 69 near the eastern border with Missouri.] where the votes are to elect statewide office holders. The problem is that isn't how the legislature is allocated.

RB: But related to that, one of the things that Dave [Kendall] and I have heard a lot in these interviews is climate change is an issue in which individual action probably isn't going to get you where you need to go, that it's going to take collective action in terms of, particularly on the energy side. But in a lot of respects, you or me going home and recycling is not going to solve this problem or even putting our own solar panels up. It's a bigger societal issue. That's why people tend to look at institutions like Legislature to help lead the way here. If they don't have those, this becomes a really difficult. Not just Legislature, but Congress, and international. You sort of see where I'm going with this. It really relies on those institutions and individual leaders for solutions.

KS: Yeah. Believe me, I'm not suggesting that each of us could solve this by going home and doing something. I do think the terminology is just baffling to a lot of people. The terms climate change don't

mean a lot to a lot of folks. It sounds so big and so global that there's nothing I can possibly do about it. So, I think that in and of itself is a problem. We have to begin to translate this into action steps that individuals can take. It may be that you work around it, it may be that we put a ballot initiative, it may be that we do some other things, but I think right now there's a real gap with the… I mean, the education is still often pitched at almost a cosmic level and leaves people terribly worried and concerned but baffled about what it is that they are supposed to be doing. Do I do a good thing by having a compost pile in my backyard. If my child doesn't use plastic straws, is that a good thing. Folks don't know what to do. and I think it requires action and frameworks at all levels, internationally, nationally, locally. So, I'm not dismissing the role government can have, but I'm saying it may be very difficult, as it was in the energy side, to get the Kansas legislature to pass a specific bill. But the [Kansas] Water Authority could move, the Governor could move, the agencies could do some things, and the goal may be to get the Legislature kind of out of the picture. Not to stop the movement that entities that have some solutions could actually make to make progress in this space.

RB: In some senses it's almost presented as an existential threat that an individual's almost powerless to deal with. That's kind of a prescription for despair almost it seems like.

KS: Well, that's what I'm saying. I do think we need to have solutions that people can get their hands around and feel like they're a part of the solution. I don't know a lot of people who want to make things worse for their grandkids or worse for their children. But I'm not sure people know what to do. in this water debate we're about to have in Kansas, there's some very specific things I think that people can do. And I'm hoping that those become more clear and translate. Talk to your legislator about what the plan should be. Somebody needs to be very clear about endorsing what the steps are to save the aquifer. If we all agree that the aquifer's a good idea, then what are we going to do to save it? What are the three or four things that can be done by an agency or the Legislature, the Governor? And then people can

begin to mobilize. So, I think we got to take this a chunk at a time. I may not be able to stop the global carbon emission immediately, but I can certainly work on steps in my own backyard.

RB: So, in some respects in both the water side and the climate change side some of the answers in terms of what can I do, the answer may be political.

KS: Yep. I think it is political, because there are political people that are going to make decisions and allocate budgets and put together resources and appoint leaders. So, it is in that way the political apparatus is going to have a lot to do about this. But whether or not that political movement can move forward or stop or moves in the right direction again is up to the will of the people they represent.

RB: Are you optimistic when it comes to this issue?

KS: You know, I don't know what this issue is. Can we impact climate change? I think so. Do we have the will to do what's necessary? I'm uncertain. I think it will take some sacrifice. I think it will take some real intentional moves to move away from some things that are familiar and into areas that are not so familiar. I don't think for wealthier individuals going to buy an electric car is the solution to the climate issues that we face. It may be one. Changing your entire fleet to electric cars? You bet. That could help. I guess I'm optimistic that I think we know what to do. I'm not sure we've translated very well, being "we" the leadership who could work on this at the federal and state and local level. But I think this generation that is going to step into authority and power pretty soon is ready to make some very different decisions and is much more knowledgeable. I mean, I think about what I knew when I became Governor. I knew nothing about a lot of these issues, and I learned a lot along the way. They're going to come into various positions of authority knowing a lot and having the tools for some action steps. So, I think we can move much more quickly with the next generation than we have in the past. So that makes me optimistic.

Dave Kendall: I have one last question. You mentioned the kind of climate migrants and I wonder what you think the odds are that as time goes on, as people get displaced off the coast of California, various

places, that they might look at Kansas and what that might imply for the future of the state in terms of in-migration. And you can answer if you can.

KS: Well, I think migration from the coastal areas—and we have seen a series of I think unbelievable kind of horrors on the coast from hurricanes to mud slides, to forest fires that are really decimating the terrain and pushing people out of familiar territory—that could push people inland and could be beneficial to states like Kansas. We do have tornadoes, and we have storms and those are getting more frequent and ferocious. But I think again an issue that we face here in the heartland and the middle of the country is water. And so, while they're being battered by water storms in the coastal areas, we are suffering from a lack of water and if we can't grow anything in Kansas anymore, if we have to change our economy dramatically because the reliance on water is not able to be depended on anymore, then I don't think we'll be a very attractive state to in migration. Right now, that would be good. We need more workers in Kansas. We need more people to do more things in this state right away. It would be great if some people decide to relocate here, but we may be again in a situation where coming to Kansas won't be so attractive. We've become an inland desert.

RB: Yeah, it's an idea that works only if you've got the resources to deal with those people who move here. I've got a friend that's just relocated here from Arizona to Lawrence partly because he was concerned about the water situation in Arizona. In this end of the state that's really not that big a deal, but in the part of the state that's population poor, it obviously is a big deal. What's really striking here is how these issues tie together with the energy. We always talk about the energy-water nexus, and you've brought it up. You have connected those all through this conversation. That didn't always used to happen. That's interesting to me that you've done that so repeatedly.

KS: Well, it's how I think about it. These are not, they're resource issues and it stems from I think there's a very natural connectedness between what's happening with an energy economy and what happens

with water. Water, again, Mike Hayden taught me years and years ago that water is our most important resource and he would say that over and over again and people would pay no attention to him whatsoever. They understood energy as oil and gas and that was part of the Kansas boom. They see coal as kind of the essential engine that runs the state had begun to, I think, redefine resources in terms of natural energy sources including wind. But I think the notion that water is so much connected to these that you can't do a lot of these operations unless you have a constant available source of water is just beginning to dawn on people. It's essential for the eastern part of the state, it's essential for irrigation, it's essential for drinking, but it's essential for business. You can't run a wind turbine farm without water. You can't have a lot of manufacturing without water. So, it's very much connected to both an urban and a rural economy

RB: He also used to say he majored in biology at Fort Hays [State University] so that he could have a lot more effect in terms of improving the environment as a politician than he could as a forest ranger or somebody going into the biology world, which I always thought was a really striking point because folks in the science world that I live in typically avoid politics like the plague. And Mike's view was exactly the opposite. If you really want to have an impact, this is where you'll go spend your time.

KS: Well, and he was a great, I think, demonstrator of that capacity. Not only as a Governor, but he used to say when he took the job as a Secretary of Wildlife and Parks this is the first job for which I'm truly qualified. He was so knowledgeable about resources and natural resources and wildlife and so loved this state and was able to put together such a compelling picture of what Kansas could and should be, but also understood how the policies that were being promulgated by agencies and legislators and the Governor, how that could either improve or really take steps back from that vision. So, he could paint the whole picture and really made those connections over and over and over again. And I know that in my

administration he was a true leader in all of those areas. As well as working a lot with communities around the state, I mean, he really led that discussion within the cabinet.

RB: I always told people Mike was a rare example of somebody that didn't mind saying what he thought and knew what he was talking about. A lot of people can do one of those two things, but he can do both.

KS: Yeah, he could do both.

[end of file]

