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December 1, 2016

Jay Scott Emler
Chairman, Kansas Corporation Commission
1500 SW Arrowhead Road
Topeka, KS 66604-4027

To Chairman Emler and Commissioners,

The proposed merger between KCP&L and Westar Energy deserves our region's resounding support for the benefits it will provide to all residents and businesses in the state of Kansas.

The Nature Conservancy has work closely with KCP&L and Westar Energy for many years collaborating to meet their renewable energy objectives and protecting nature by utilizing low-risk wind development strategies for development or purchase of renewable energy. The impact of the partnerships has enriched wildlife populations on the native grasslands and wetlands in Kansas. The iconic Great Plains landscape can thrive using focused and innovative approaches to grassland conservation.

The Conservancy also has great appreciation for Westar Energy's Green Team, comprised of a group of employee and retiree volunteers that take on environmental projects across Kansas. Green Team has been generous in supporting the conservation goals of many organizations, schools and The Nature Conservancy. The Green Team has been vital in helping the Conservancy restore grasslands and wetland habitats on the verge of vanishing forever. Their efforts yield multiple benefits, not only for grassland species, but for all people.

KCP&L and Westar Energy are both leaders of the region. They are dedicated to advancing the growth of our state's businesses and economy, while also acting as stewards of the land and our natural resources. They are champions for the region through their innovative and visionary business models and they empower their employees to be leaders of the communities in which they live, work and play.

KCP&L and Westar Energy already have a history of working together as neighbors to the betterment of our region, so the integration process will be simple and straightforward. The combination of their innovations and focus on sustainable and renewable energy portfolios will place our region on the map as a shining example of what is possible. Look no further than the fact that the combined company will have one of the largest wind portfolios in the United States.

History has proven that when utilities are operated by holding companies located far away from the regions they serve, their support for local community engagement and economic development declines. When utilities expand their operations in a geographic region, they become that much more committed and engaged. The size of this merger, coupled with the adjacent service territories, will result in benefits to customers and businesses alike.

Businesses around the country and world understand the importance of competitive electric rates and the benefits of a diversified portfolio of energy sources. KCP&L and Westar's innovations and leadership have fostered a climate in our region that attracts businesses and skilled individuals. With future headquarters in Kansas and Missouri, the collaboration across state lines will only improve, creating opportunities and savings throughout our area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Manes", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Manes
State Director
The Nature Conservancy of Kansas