

**JERRY MORAN**  
FIRST DISTRICT  
KANSAS

COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE

COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC

1217 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-1601  
(202) 225-2715

DISTRICT OFFICES:  
ROOM 203, DAVIS HALL  
FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY  
P.O. BOX 249  
HAYS, KS 67601-0249  
(785) 628-6401  
20 WEST 2ND  
SUITE 303  
P.O. BOX 1128  
HUTCHINSON, KS 67504-1128  
(316) 665-6138

January 22, 2001

Mr. Randy Speaker  
Director, Housing Development Division  
Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing  
700 S.W. Harrison St., Suite 1300  
Topeka, Kansas 66603-3712

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am writing to request that the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing consider an application for housing tax credits from Mr. David Criswell for the purpose of constructing senior living apartments in Wilson, Kansas.

An aging population and record-low unemployment rates are combining to develop an acute need for quality, affordable housing in rural Kansas communities. If the application is approved, Mr. Criswell will participate in the development of affordable apartments dedicated to senior citizens. In addition to meeting an acute community need, the project will utilize wheat straw bales in an effort to provide safe, efficient energy conservation in a way that utilizes available agricultural resources.

Approval of tax credits would provide Mr. Criswell an opportunity to contribute to the quality of life in Wilson. Consideration of his tax credit application by the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing is greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

*Jerry Moran*

Jerry Moran

JM:mz

JANIS K. LEE  
ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER  
STATE SENATOR, 36TH DISTRICT  
BARTON, ELLSWORTH, JEWELL,  
LINCOLN, MITCHELL, OSBORNE,  
PHILLIPS, REPUBLIC, RUSSELL  
AND SMITH COUNTIES  
RR 1, BOX 145  
KENSINGTON, KANSAS 66951  
(785) 476-2294 HOME  
(785) 296-7366 TOPEKA  
jlee@ink.org



TOPEKA

SENATE CHAMBER

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS  
RANKING MEMBER: ASSESSMENT & TAXATION  
MEMBER: EDUCATION  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE  
UTILITIES  
LEGISLATIVE EDUCATIONAL  
PLANNING  
SRS TRANSITION OVERSIGHT

February 1, 2001

Re: Housing Tax Credit application for Wilson, Kansas

Dear Department of Housing;

This letter is written to request your highest possible consideration for the tax credit application for affordable apartments in Wilson, Kansas. This project known as Czech Cottages is greatly needed by the community of Wilson. The location on property across from the Wilson Senior Center will be an advantage for seniors who need the housing and the community itself.

Mr. David Criswell has provided me information regarding straw bale construction. I believe the energy conservation value and safety record offered by this construction method are compelling and cause it to be worthy of our support. High fuel prices should give us every incentive to seek solutions, especially for those on limited incomes.

I thank you for giving your serious consideration to this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janis Lee". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Janis K. Lee  
State Senator  
36th District

STATE OF KANSAS

LAURA L. MCCLURE  
202 SOUTH 4TH  
OSBORNE, KS 67473  
(785) 346-2715



REPRESENTATIVE, 119TH DISTRICT  
STATE CAPITOL  
ROOM 278-W  
TOPEKA, KS 66612-1504  
(785) 296-7680  
1-800-432-3924

TOPEKA  
HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

January 22, 2001

Re: Czech Cottages - Housing Tax Credit Application

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written in support of housing tax credit assistance for the construction of Czech Cottages in Wilson, Kansas.

Many communities within the 119th District are in need of high-quality affordable housing. For the Wilson area, Czech Cottages will help address that need in a unique and refreshing way by using a locally abundant and inexpensive resource - wheat straw - as super-insulation.

Features of these apartments include thick and sturdy walls, a safe room in each apartment, steel framing and radiant floor heat. I'm particularly pleased that this housing project incorporates design standards that are friendly for our senior and disabled populations. I believe these apartments will provide comfort, security and a permanent hedge against rising energy costs.

I encourage you to give serious consideration to Czech Cottages' application for housing tax credits. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura McClure". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Laura McClure  
State Representative - 119th District

STATE OF KANSAS

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS  
MEMBER: TRANSPORTATION  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
TOURISM  
BUSINESS, COMMERCE & LABOR

JERRY L. ADAY  
REPRESENTATIVE, 67TH DISTRICT  
DICKINSON, ELLSWORTH, SALINE  
AND MCPHERSON COUNTIES  
P.O. BOX 1  
ELLSWORTH, KS 67439  
STATE CAPITOL—556-N  
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1504  
(785) 296-7681  
1-800-432-3924



TOPEKA

HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES  
January 4, 2001

To Whom It may Concern:

I am writing this correspondence in strong support of the housing tax credit application of Czech Cottage LLC to be built in Wilson, Kansas.

As a rural State Representative and Economic Development Director, I am all too well aware of the housing situation in rural Kansas. The lack of affordable housing is one of the major problems facing the small communities throughout rural Kansas. Projects such as Czech Cottage are a vital component for the future development of these communities.

The project has a unique concept which could have a major impact on future building of affordable housing in western Kansas. With possible lower construction costs and installation factors reducing heating and cooling cost housing would become more obtainable for the elderly and lower incomes.

If I can be of any assistance or if additional information is needed feel free to contact me at either my Topeka or Ellsworth (785-472-4136) office. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Jerry L. Aday  
State Representative 67th District

December 4, 2000

Dear Sirs:

We, the patrons of Wilson Senior Center, Wilson, Ks., would like to extend our support and endorsement of the proposed apartment complex across the street from the center.

We feel it would be an excellent location in that it is located in the downtown area and would be close to most of the business area of Wilson.

We also understand that there is an intention of it being a straw bale construction which has been explained to us and we feel it would cause a great savings in fuel bills in the winter and electrical bills in the summer. We also understand there is an intention to have a "safe room" in each unit to provide safety from storms. We are really excited about having this unit here in Wilson as there is a need for more housing for senior citizens.

Sincerely,

Helma Liefers Dorcas Shuman Verna Schiele  
Evelyn Charvat Ben Everett Delores Schmidt  
Guth Marie Borell Norma Thomas Weber Wells Schmidt  
Melvin Steink Glenda R. Morgan Pauline Jvolanek  
Ivan Steink Charlett Bruce Zeroy C. Klema  
Regina Mahoney Karen Loukup Cindy Heinze  
Joan Langlof Alice Kellian Gene Schmidt  
Joan Langlof Rose West \_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Rupp Helen Mickley \_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Anschutz Gail Weinkold \_\_\_\_\_

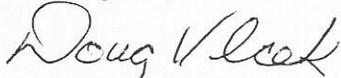
February 6, 2001

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

David Criswell discussed his project to build senior apartments at our meeting on January 17, 2001, including the idea of using straw bales as insulation in the walls. Compared to wood stud wall construction the risk of fire with straw bales as insulation will be less due to the limited amount of oxygen to support combustion.

The Wilson Fire Department adds its endorsement to Mr. Criswell's project.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Vlcek".

Doug Vlcek

Chief, Wilson Fire Department

**WILSON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

*"Czech Capital of Kansas"*

Phone 658-2211

Box 328

Wilson, Kansas 67490

January 17, 2001

Mr. David Criswell  
715 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Salina, Kansas

Dear David:

The Wilson Chamber of Commerce exists to advance the general welfare and prosperity of the Wilson area so that its citizens and its business community shall prosper.

The chamber board of Directors appreciates you describing your project at our meeting on December 13<sup>th</sup>. Your apartment units are badly needed by this community, and the Chamber is very supportive of your project.

The chamber also approves of your intention to use straw bales for building insulation. The Chamber is glad to serve as local sponsor for a straw bale construction workshop that will be held in Wilson on March 10, 2001.

Thanks for you efforts to improve Wilson.

Sincerely,



Billie Root  
President, Board of Directors  
Wilson Chamber of Commerce

**WILSON** / *Economic Development Corporation*  
Wilson, Kansas 67490

February 5, 2001

Housing Division  
Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing

To Whom It Concern:

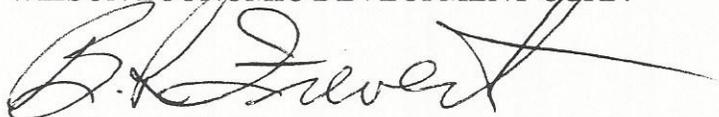
We are giving you this letter of recommendation for David Criswell's application to build affordable apartments for the senior citizens of Wilson, Kansas. We understand he is seeking housing tax credits from the Housing Division of the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing.

Our community needs housing for our senior citizens and we believe Mr. Criswell's project will supply affordable housing, and provide our senior citizens with a better quality of housing with the safety and energy efficiency of the straw bale construction, as well as, enhance our community and generate income for rural farming communities like ours.

We recommend this project to you and ask that you consider this application for our community.

Sincerely,

WILSON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP.



B. R. Frevert, President

BRF/wfo

Board of Directors  
Lang Memorial Library  
P. O. Box 310  
Wilson, Kansas 67490  
January 3, 2001

To Whom It May Concern,

During our December board meeting, David Criswell spoke to us about his plan to build a straw bale apartment complex next to our community library. We feel this project will benefit our community as well as our library. As David spoke to us about the uniqueness of this project, enthusiasm spread.

Viewing pictures from the book on straw bale construction that David donated to the library, we were able to see the uniqueness of the building. The straw bale structure appears to be very safe and energy efficient. Many tests have been conducted on these structures with positive results. We were sold on the idea of the straw bale effectiveness and feel many people will agree.

We are a small rural community in the middle of many acres of wheat and this building would attract people here to see what we have. When people come into our friendly community, they may want to visit our library to look at our book or video on straw bale construction, or eat at a local restaurant, shop in one of the quaint shops or possibly spend the night in one of our two lodging establishments.

Located across the street from the Senior Center and next door to the community library, this apartment complex would be wonderful for anyone seeking a place to live. Increased patron usage should occur in both establishments.

On behalf of the board of directors of the Lang Memorial Library, I would like to say that the idea of a straw bale apartment complex would be a benefit for Wilson. Not only will it provide a safe and efficient place to live but also a unique structure to share with others.

Sincerely,



Allison Ford  
Lang Memorial Library

January 9, 2001

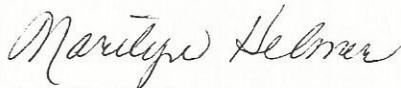
Dear Members of the KDOC & H Tax Credit Board,

The apartments with wheat straw proposed by David Criswell to be built in Wilson, Kansas are of great interest to us.

The new market for local wheat would add to the economy in the region we promote as the "Amazing 100 Miles". We believe the apartments would draw a substantial number of visitors interested in alternative methods of construction as well as those seeking to find new markets for agricultural products. Wilson is an ideal location for such a project and is convenient for visitors traveling interstate 70. The apartments would add to the many attractions in the area.

Please lend your support to this important project.

Thank You,



Marilyn Helmer  
Amazing 100 Mile Board Member



**S E R V I C E S**  
The Products and Services Division of Austin Energy,  
Austin's Municipally Owned Electric Utility

December 13, 2000

David Criswell  
715 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Salina, Kansas 67401

Dear David:

Approximately 70 straw bale homes have been built in or near the City of Austin since 1990. Straw bale homes have demonstrated significant advances in safety, health, durability and energy efficiency. The City of Austin is among the jurisdictions that have adopted a straw bale building code. Through the Green Building Program, the City of Austin is working to educate people about the benefits of straw bale construction and many other viable alternatives to the typical 2x4 wood frame construction.

As Project Manager for the City of Austin's Green Building Program, I assist contractors and people involved in home construction or remodeling projects to be better informed about home construction methods that will help achieve greater value with lesser environmental burden. Due to the high R-value and decreased air infiltration of the system, owners of straw bale homes pay significantly less to heat and cool their homes than do owners of conventionally constructed homes. The system's use of healthier materials such as straw, stucco and plaster (versus the glues, volatile organic compounds and formaldehydes typically associated with standard construction), also immeasurably increases the value of such homes.

Presently, four Austin-based construction companies are employed full-time constructing straw bale homes. Consumers in our area and nationwide are becoming much more educated and interested in saving money, conserving energy and living in healthier homes, and as such, the trend toward more energy efficient homes such as those employing such systems as straw bale construction is definitely increasing.

If any of your state or local officials wish to know more about straw bale construction, please feel free to have them to call me.

Best wishes for your project.

Sincerely,

Marc Richmond  
Project Manager  
Austin Energy, Green Building Program  
512-505-3701

Cell  
512-565-8611  
FAX: 512-505-3711  
marc.richmond@  
austinerenergy.com

# **dcat** *Development Center for Appropriate Technology*

P.O. Box 27513 Tucson, AZ 85726-7513 ph (520) 624-6628 fax (520) 798-3701  
<http://www.dcat.net> ~ [info@dcat.net](mailto:info@dcat.net)

January 31, 2001

David Criswell  
715 S. 5th Street  
Salina, Kansas 67401

Dear Mr. Criswell:

Since 1992, the Development Center for Appropriate Technology (DCAT) has been a tax-exempt non-profit corporation working to develop and implement more sustainable technologies. DCAT was instrumental in developing prescriptive building codes for both load-bearing and non-load-bearing straw bale construction for Pima County and the City of Tucson, Arizona, as well as the guidelines for straw bale construction adopted by the California State Assembly and Senate and signed into law by the Governor of California in October 1995. These codes were the basis of similar codes that have been adopted by Austin Texas, Boulder Colorado, the Maricopa Association of Governments (Phoenix Arizona metropolitan area), and the State of Oregon.

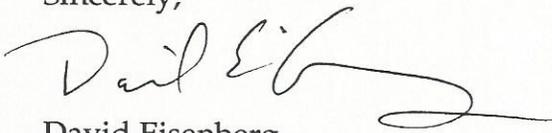
DCAT's extensive experience with straw bale construction around the U.S. shows it to be a safe and practical alternative to conventionally insulated buildings. Thermal testing carried out at Oak Ridge National Laboratory's state-of-the-art testing facility showed a straw bale wall panel to have double the tested R-value (thermal resistance) of two-by-six wood frame walls with fiberglass batt insulation. There are many examples of straw bale structures with dramatically lower utility bills than similar conventionally built structures, but it is worth noting that the California Energy Commission, known for its strict and technically demanding energy conservation policies, has given straw bale wall systems an automatic R-30 insulation value, higher than any other standard wall system in common use.

The bale houses that Habitat for Humanity and the Tucson Urban League built, as well as the bale house that the Town of Guadalupe, Arizona (Phoenix area) have all had significantly greater comfort and reportedly much lower utility bills. Though we do not have records of the actual bills, we have ample evidence of the thermal performance of these houses. For example, the new owners of the Habitat for Humanity house in Tucson, moved their family into the house in the fall and called us in late January to ask how to turn the furnace on. When we expressed amazement and dismay that no one had shown them how to operate the furnace, they said they had been shown when they moved in, but that they had forgotten because they had not needed to turn the heat on until then and had been quite comfortable without it.

Straw bale construction got its beginnings in the middle of the U.S. in Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, and reportedly in Kansas as well, according to some of the earliest patents for the technology. There are bale houses in Nebraska dating back to 1903, with many that were built in the 1920s and 1930s still in use today. When properly designed and built, straw bale structures offer a safe, durable, energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, affordable and beautiful solution to housing needs. Fire and structural testing clearly show that this is a viable building system and the thousands of such buildings that have been built in the past decade prove it is not merely an abandoned building technique.

If I may be of further assistance in answering questions or providing additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Eisenberg", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

David Eisenberg  
Director



PIMA COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
201 N. Stone Avenue, 1st Floor  
Tucson, Arizona 85701-1207

JUDITH A. PATRICK  
Director

Phone: (520) 740-6520  
FAX: (520) 798-1836

July 18, 1995

Mr. Clinton H. Tawse, Building Official  
Pueblo Regional Building Department  
316 W. 15th Street  
Pueblo, CO 81003

*Clint*  
Dear Mr. Tawse,

Enclosed you will find a copy of the draft Appendix chapter to be included as a local amendment to the 1994 Uniform Building Code when it is adopted in Pima County and the City of Tucson this year.

As David Eisenberg can tell you, it has been a long, arduous process to reach this point. First there was a series of structural tests done by a graduate student at the University of Arizona to show the adequacy of the strawbale system to adequately support lateral and vertical loads. After that, permits were issued for the construction of post-and-beam structures using strawbales as infill material, with the stipulation that the building would be monitored for a period of two years to determine how the materials performed. Most recently, a permit was issued for the construction of a dwelling using strawbales as load-bearing walls, with the same stipulation. To date, we have had no reports of structural failures, and the users report that the thermal qualities of the building are outstanding.

The provisions of the proposed appendix chapter are based upon the results of the testing done at the university and the experiences of people pioneering the use of the material. As you will note, the use of load-bearing strawbale walls is limited to single-family dwellings (R-3) and accessory buildings (U) occupancies. Non load-bearing (infill) walls would not be restricted as far as occupancy group is concerned, provided the use is not required to be in a building of fire-resistant construction.

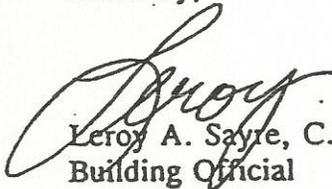
Building Codes Division  
Leroy A. Sayre, C.B.O., Building Official  
Phone: (520) 740-6485

While this form of construction is supported by many people who see it as a possible answer to "affordable" housing, whatever that is, some engineers are opposed to it because they cannot prove the design by calculation. However, my experience has been that there are several portions of the Uniform Building Code that contain prescriptive methods for construction that cannot be proven by calculation. These are what we call "conventional" or "empirical" provisions. We know from many years' experience that they work. The same can be said for strawbale construction. There are examples of buildings, built to a lesser standard than is proposed here, that have stood the test of time for nearly one hundred years.

If this material is accepted by code officials as a viable construction material, then I have accomplished one of my goals, that is to make people aware that there is more than one way to build a safe, functional building, at a reasonable cost. While this will probably not be readily accepted by many, it does provide an alternative to environmentally conscious people who are looking for a way to build without further destroying our forests, because this material is annually renewable.

I'm sorry I can't attend the upcoming meeting of Building Officials, but I hope this is of some value to you. Perhaps we can get together at the ICBO annual meeting, either this year or next. I look forward to it.

Sincerely,



Leroy A. Sayre, C.B.O.  
Building Official

cc: David Eisenberg



## Farm Bureau Insurance

FARM BUREAU MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY • KFB INSURANCE COMPANY  
KANSAS FARM BUREAU LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY • FB SERVICES INSURANCE AGENCY

January 24, 2001

David Criswell  
Czech Cottages, L.L.C.  
715 S. 5th Street  
Salina, Kansas 67401

Dear David,

Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company has had a favorable loss experience insuring homes in Kansas that employ straw baies in their construction.

Farm Bureau will provide coverage for the Czech Cottages apartments you plan to build in Wilson. Based on the information you have provided, our premium for the annual coverage is \$1002 per duplex building, \$ 4008 for all four buildings.

This quote may be adjusted based on actual construction cost.

Your business is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Mikel Pruitt  
Agency Manager  
Russell County