

Submitted by: Brandi McCoy

In February of 2019, Kansas House Bill 2273 died in Committee. Had this bill become law, it would have created state-wide setbacks to protect rural communities from industrial wind energy companies' exploitation. Wind energy lobbyists argued that "The state shouldn't make the decision for statewide setbacks, the decision should be left to the counties." If the state is not going to take responsibility for the problem they created when they allowed industries to come into our state tax free, then the counties are going to have to stand up for themselves. Sadly, in Nemaha County we tried. In 2012, our county commissioners enacted 3000-foot setbacks from homes and 1500-foot setbacks from property lines. This resolution, unfortunately, was later rescinded in 2016 at Nextera's request.

The current so-called wind turbine setbacks in the term sheet developed by the Nemaha County Commissioners and Nextera now allows a 500-foot wind turbine to be located within 600 feet of a non-participating property line. Yet, Nextera's hardhat zone for these 500-foot wind turbines is 1,350 feet. There are some who would call that a mathematical error. I call it exploitation. 1,350 feet is not even acceptably safe, as shown in Ontario where blade debris was thrown 1900 feet. What disturbs me is this information was provided to our commissioners, yet it is acceptable to put a wind turbine within 600 feet of someone's property.

I believe landowners should be able to develop on their land as they please as long as their decisions aren't adversely impacting the rights of others. With these wind turbines, you can argue your property rights all you want, but remember, property rights go BOTH WAYS. Wind turbines placed closer than 2000 feet from a home not only pose safety risks, but they decrease property values by 25-40%.

Since the wind turbine issue in Nemaha County began it has divided neighbors and divided families. If you want renewable energy, that is wonderful, but we need to find a way to do that without tearing apart our rural communities we are trying so hard to rebuild.

The fact is our rural communities are not equipped to stand against industrial wind. Even in Nemaha County where 80% of the people who spoke at the county hearing for the term sheet did not want wind turbines in their county. Our commissioners could not (or would not) help us against Nextera. We recently elected new commissioners who are open to consideration of zoning the county, but it is already too late for many members in our community. Zoning is a difficult and expensive road for many rural counties. The backbone of Kansas is its small rural communities and as our State Leaders you need to do whatever you can to protect them and help them prosper. Granted, the money from these wind turbines looks prosperous, but we are in danger of being exploited by Wind Energy Companies who have no real interest in our rural communities, other than to divide and conquer them for their own self-enrichment. If the state wants to protect rural communities then I urge you, please, start by passing SB279.