

**Testimony submitted for Senate Bill No. 279**  
**Senate Utilities Committee hearing held on March 22, 2021**  
Member of Reno County Citizens for Quality of Life

Chairman Thompson and members of the Senate Utilities Committee:  
Proponent Testimony SB279

My husband and I are raising our five children in southeast Reno County. We own a quarter section and an FAA-certified turf airstrip. You may be familiar with the situation in Reno County, but let me take a few seconds to explain it for you.

For three years, our part of Reno County has been deeply entrenched in a fight for our homes and community. NextEra Energy began leasing land years prior to this, but the majority of the area was not aware of the situation until 2018. Reno County had almost nothing when it came to zoning regulations for commercial wind farms (they still have yet to pass any improved regulations) and on top of that, the majority of the leased area was at the time completely unzoned. Part of the proposed footprint for the wind facility that I am referring to has been zoned since then, but not the area where my family lives.

In the fall of 2018, the landowners in our area banded together and pushed hard for a moratorium on wind energy until we could get better regulations in place. We presented over 700 signatures to our county commissioners in support of a moratorium, but the motion failed due to NextEra stating that a 6 month moratorium would “kill the project”. In early 2019 Nextera submitted a conditional use permit application for Pretty Prairie Wind Farm. The CUP hearing lasted four days and an overwhelming 87% of speakers requested denial of the CUP. The commissioners voted 2-1 to approve, but due to 46% of qualifying adjacent landowners in the CUP area filing protest petitions, the CUP was denied because it was under the 3/4 requirement. (The minimum amount of land required for a protest petition to be valid is 20% and we had 46%). Keep in mind, the protest petition area is only anything within 1000’ of (in this case) the property sited to be occupied by a turbine. Many more petitions were filed but thrown out due to land being in the unzoned area, or other factors. So as you can see, the area affected is overwhelmingly against a commercial wind farm being constructed.

After the protest petition was denied due to the lack of a supermajority, NextEra proceeded to sue Reno County over the validity of the protest petitions. The district court ruled in favor of Reno County and the case is now at the appellate court level.

We have been tied up in litigation with them since July 2019.

Now that you have some backstory on what is happening in Reno, let me tell you how this affects my family and me personally.

As I said previously, we own an airstrip. My husband purchased the land where it and our home sit before we were married, at just 24 years old. It's a pretty gutsy thing for a 24-year-old to purchase 160 acres completely on his own, with just a dream and a plan. But my husband is a gutsy man, and my husband loves airplanes. Anyone who knows a small-aircraft pilot knows that flying goes much deeper than a normal hobby. It's more of an obsession and first love. My husband's dream, now our dream, was to build a flying community. So far, two houses have been built on that quarter section. Our turf strip is on the FAA's map. You can imagine the sinking in our hearts two years ago when we looked at the proposed CUP map and saw 3 turbines placed in the traffic pattern of our runway. In case you don't know, the traffic pattern is the route taken every landing and every take-off. A 500-foot obstacle in the pattern is terrifying. A 500-foot spinning tower in the pattern causing turbulence in addition to being an obstacle is impossible and deadly. This year, my husband had an engine failure inside our traffic pattern. He was thankfully able to land on the nearby dirt road without catastrophe (although he is highly encouraged to replace the engine in the plane) but if the turbines had been placed where they were sited that would probably be a different story.

A life-long dream, over a decade in the making was and still is at risk. We are just one example of rural land use that will be utterly destroyed if a wind farm goes unchecked in our area. And we are not a deserted chunk of land. As of 2019, this area of the county is more densely populated than any existing wind farm in the state.

There is a lack of understanding at the county level. We have some county officials who see the gravity of the situation and have fought hard for justice, but there are a lot of county officials who are at best apathetic. The stories don't hit home if they don't affect you. The property values are negligible if they're not your property values.

We need SB 279. For too long small communities have been completely overrun by billion-dollar corporations bent on ramming

their agenda through whether or not it's welcome. We need you, our state officials, to do what our local leaders have been unable to do.

We are just ordinary people. We don't have unlimited budgets to hire well-trained lobbyists to plead our case for us. Please prove that this is more than a political game, and support SB279.

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