

March 18, 2021

Chairman Thompson and members of the Senate Utilities Committee

Proponent Testimony SB279

Dear Members of the Senate Utilities Committee,

My wife, Tammie, and I own two modest homes in Parsons; we will never be courted to host an industrial wind turbine. So, why do we care about commercial wind energy developments? The answer is simple, *Community*. Our community is not just the city of Parsons, nor is it contained within the boundaries of Labette County. Our community is comprised of friends and neighbors throughout Kansas. It is the hawks, herons, eagles, and geese we see in flight; it is farmers harvesting crops late into the night, and it is watching breathtaking Kansas sunsets. These things cannot be owned by anyone, but I gratefully accept the responsibility to be a steward of them.

Labette County may soon host one or more renewable energy facilities. Whether this happens or not depends entirely upon decisions to be made by our three county commissioners, two of which have been board members less than six months. To my knowledge, our commissioners do not have experience negotiating with international corporations that have developed renewable energy facilities for decades. I question the ability of local commissions to absorb and weigh the complex details of industrial wind energy developments and operation. Another concern, unfortunately, is one of integrity. If a simple majority of our commission should choose to base their decisions on factors other than the well-being of all Labette County residents, then not only is our quality of life at risk, but the foundation of democratic freedoms and protection will be compromised as well.

This is not a legacy we should be willing to pass on to future generations.

In carefully reading the provisions of SB 279, I feel that it establishes reasonable requirements for ensuring the health, safety, and happiness of a majority of affected Kansans. I recently discussed this bill before our county commissioners. One commissioner argued that it would, theoretically, prohibit him from being able to have even one turbine sited on a section of land. If adopted as state law, this bill would make it more difficult for commercial wind energy developments to be located in certain regions of Kansas, but I contend that these regions are ill-suited to shoulder the negative impacts such large developments would likely bring long-term, or even indefinitely. As I view it, the principal intent of this bill is simply to create a uniform set of parameters that will minimize the potential for inadequate or corrupted decision-making by local county commissions.

Kansas is uniquely rich in its history, wildlife, and natural resources; however, its most valuable resource is its residents. I worry that if we permit the financial interests of private industry to take precedence over the human interests of Kansas citizens, the fabric of this state will be irreparably damaged.

So many of us, who choose to live in rural communities, do not take for granted how special and fragile our way of life is. I am convinced that most Kansans understand change is part of life, even rural life, but we cannot be expected to accept change that has the potential to drastically alter the very core of what was left to us, and what we hold dear.

I respectfully request your support of Kansas Senate Bill SB 279.

Sincerely,

Dave Oas
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