

Testimony in Opposition to SB 279
By former Senate President Dave Kerr
Hutchinson, KS

Members of the Senate Utilities Committee:

After leaving the Senate, I became involved in Hutchinson/Reno County efforts in Economic Development. Thus, I had the privilege in May of 2008 of greeting the site selection team leader for Siemens Wind as he stopped in Hutch, one of 13 cities he was visiting. These cities had been culled from more than 100 that had responded to a request for proposals to be the location for Siemens' North American Wind Nacelle Manufacturing facility.

In September, he returned with his entire eight person team. It was Governor's Day at the State Fair so we invited the Governor to meet with them too. The Governor assured the team that, "not only is Kansas a great wind state, but we believe in renewable energy and we want to grow it in our State." Then they left to visit the other four finalist cities, all of them in other states.

Eventually, there was "The Phone Call." The battery was low on my phone, so the Lt. Governor and I took the call in my car in a Capitol area parking lot. They told us they really liked Hutchinson and Kansas, but the #2 community, Sioux City, IA was offering a slightly better incentive package. Could we consider and talk again at 11am the next morning?

After a late evening meeting at Cedar Crest, we were ready. The Governor played it well, "if you'll commit now to coming to Hutch, we'll find the matching funds."

At the 2009 State Fair, we held a great and grand groundbreaking for the new plant. I believe bringing the Siemens Wind Nacelle Manufacturing plant to Hutchinson was one of the best examples of intergovernmental teamwork I have seen. The City and County played big and vital roles and the State Department of Commerce was a key partner.

Over the months of negotiations, I believe I was in every meeting and on every phone call. I don't recall a single time anyone said to Siemens, "we sure would like to have your jobs here, but we're not much interested in having any towers. In fact, we might establish setbacks and covenants so severe that you probably won't be able to sell any units here."

It's 2021 and to this point we can accurately say that everyone has lived up to their commitments.

- Siemens, now Siemens-Gamesa, has brought over 260 well paying jobs with excellent benefits to the community.
- This year the beautiful facility will come on to the tax rolls after the 10 year abatement.
- Enough nacelles have been built in Hutchinson to provide electricity to all the homes in Kansas and a couple of neighboring states.
- Landowners and local governments in 41 Kansas counties have enjoyed economic benefits from wind unit placements, many of them Siemens-Gamesa units.

So, what should this committee do with SB 279? One of the toughest things legislators can do—nothing. If enacted, this bill would be the most wind unfriendly legislation in the entire "wind belt". We would have no more "wind harvesting" in Kansas.

Local governments have both the authority and knowledge to regulate wind tower placement to the extent it is needed. Even if you tried to develop an "even handed" bill, which this one is not, the varying conditions, terrain, transmission capacity and desires across the state would ensure that you could not get it right. Please do not advance this bill.