

Kansas Senate Committee on Utilities  
WRITTEN TESTIMONY in SUPPORT of SB46  
Submitted by Shirley Estrada  
January 25, 2023

Chairman Robert Olson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shirley Estrada, a private citizen of Neosho County, Kansas.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of SB46, which I believe is needed in order to take back our rural Kansas night skies from the blight inflicted by the red flashing lights of nearly 4,000 turbines (and counting) in this state.

***“Apex will...actively engage to better develop our project and become a good neighbor.”***

These are the words of Apex Clean Energy in one of their “Get the Facts” mailers in promoting their project, Neosho Ridge Wind. But what are the makings of a “good neighbor”? It certainly can’t be that of covering one-fourth of a county with 139 turbines equipped with red flashing lights—no, make that 278 flashing lights, as each turbine is equipped with 2 lights--as soon as dusk begins and continues through the night, every night.

Unfortunately, the red flashing lights on the Neosho Ridge Wind project are more than a mere “nuisance”; they are a blight on the countryside. The turbines are divided into multiple circuits, flashing at different intervals and at different sequences. However, those viewing the project from afar may view these various sequences as being more of a unified “synchronization” than those living closer to the project, which makes the description of the flashing lights difficult until one is able to view first hand and from different vantage points. Driving through the red flashing lights cause a hypnotic, distracting and disorientating effect.

The visual effects of the red flashing lights are not limited to those who live within the footprint of the Neosho Ridge Wind project—they extend to those living within the entire county—some affected more than others—and beyond to those outside of the county. Due to the height and varying elevations, vantage points in neighboring Labette County can see a 10-mile “line” of red flashing lights, through no decision of their own. They can also be seen in neighboring Montgomery, Allen, Bourbon, and Crawford, to name a few. Currently, Neosho can see lights on projects built in neighboring Allen, Bourbon and Crawford counties.

Once the Neosho Ridge Wind project was far along enough to realize how far-reaching the red blinking lights were at night, our county commissioners agreed to the formation of a committee to research and engage the efforts of Liberty Utilities, as they had purchased an interest in Neosho Ridge Wind as the operator. While there have been no definite proposals, tentative figures have been received as to the cost to retrofit the turbines with a light-mitigating technology system. One company estimated it would cost \$1M - \$1.5 Million to retrofit, with approximately \$20,000-\$30,000 annually for a maintenance

agreement. Another estimate was \$2.3 Million, but that also included the cost of a third-party engineering firm to oversee the project.

No doubt the wind industry argument against SB46 is that this added equipment will be “too expensive”. For arguments sake, let’s assume the cost to install a light-mitigating technology system on the 139-turbine Neosho Ridge Wind project is a generous \$2.5 Million (\$1.5 Million for equipment/installation plus \$1 Million for maintenance agreements for 30 years). If this had been initially installed, it would have added **one-half of one percent (.5%)** to an approximately \$500 Million project. To put this into another perspective, that one-half of one percent would have added a mere \$200 onto the purchase of a \$40,000 car—the cost of a nominal “add-on”!

No doubt another wind industry argument against SB46 will be, “We want to be a ‘good neighbor’ but we can’t justify passing the cost on to our ratepayers.” According to Liberty’s website (the operator of the Neosho Ridge Wind project), they deliver electricity to approximately 273,000 customers. This would equate to an approximately \$9.00 one-time cost to each customer; spread out over 30 years, a mere **2.5 cents per month!**

And yet another wind industry argument against SB46 will be that this equipment “can’t be required retroactively”. Yet, cities across Kansas and the country enact ordinances and requirements regarding signage size and height restrictions, smoking to non-smoking conversion, clean air equipment and retrofits to coal plants, to name a few, to beautify their cities and for the health, safety and welfare of their citizens, **at the expense to the business.**

The blight on our dark rural night skies has been assaulted by the wind companies and passively endorsed by our state officials for the past 20 years. They are reaping the benefits of being exempt from property taxes for 10 years, with little to no accountability for the blight it has created. As turbine heights and the number of projects rapidly increase, especially in the eastern half of the state, the number of disgruntled Kansans affected by the blinking red lights will only increase—unless regulations are established to bring back our dark rural Kansas night sky.

*“How often at night, when the heavens are bright  
With the light of the glittering stars,  
Have I stood here amazed and asked as I gazed  
If their glory exceeds this of ours”*

(Verse 6 of “Home on the Range”, the Official State Song of Kansas)

These wind operators/owners **CAN** afford to install this technology, but they won’t unless there are regulations on the state level to requiring them to do so. Sadly, they must be forced to be “good neighbors”.

Please vote **“Yes” to pass SB46** in order to reclaim our rural night skies from the blight inflicted by the industrial wind companies, and once again, view without obstruction the “light of the glittering stars”.