

Kansas Senate Local Government Committee

Testimony in favor of SB 325

Submitted by Bryan W. Coover

Chairwoman Carolyn McGinn and members of the Committee:

My name is Bryan Coover. I reside in southern Neosho County, Kansas. I have an engineering degree from KSU. I have served on the board of Twin Valley Electric Co-operative for 20 years. I have served nearly as long on the board of trustees of Kansas Electric Power Co-Operative, a generation and transmission co-op that provides power to 16 rural electric co-ops in eastern Kansas. I am currently the treasurer of KEPCO. KEPCO owns part of Wolf Creek Nuclear power plant, a small share of Iatan 2 (a high efficiency coal plant north of Kansas City) and maintains long term contracts with two hydroelectric administrations as well as Evergy and the Southwest Power Pool. This is my testimony in support of SB 325 as a private individual and citizen of Kansas, not as a representative of the above organizations.

Over those years, I have had direct contact with a wide variety of utility industry entities. Almost without exception, professionalism and integrity among individuals and their organizations is the norm in this industry. The exception to that rule can be found in the wind industry. The following is a brief recount of one experience of mine with Apex Wind Energy.

In the spring of 2019, a small group of Neosho County residents had been coming to every Neosho County Commission meeting to voice their concerns over the then proposed Neosho Ridge Wind Project. Many of us provided public comment on subjects such as property value, quality of life reduction, health issues, etc. with the respect to living among wind turbines. I presented a list of five lies told by Apex representatives in their quest to gain county support. I detailed each lie and the means for proving the falsehood of it. I stated that approval of NRW would result in Apex receiving nearly \$30 million dollars per year in tax subsidy, more than enough to overwhelm any legal effort to collect for actual damages.

The next morning, while at work, myself, my wife Debbie, and neighbors Leroy and Cheryl Burk were the discussing the commission meeting of the night before. I received a phone call from James Stovall, an Apex representative. During a lengthy tirade, Mr. Stovall swore at me several times and admonished me to shut up or face the consequences. "Apex has 30 fucking attorneys on the payroll. You need to shut up". I and the other people that witnessed the phone call took the whole exchange to be threatening and quite bizarre.

APEX sent letters to the Neosho County commissioners, threatening to take legal action against the county if contracts were not signed to allow building Neosho Ridge Wind, a 139-turbine facility with 511 homes beneath them.

Last year, the Kansas Senate Utilities considered a bill that would have regulated several aspects of the wind development industry. The opponents to that bill argued that all counties where wind farms have been built had welcomed wind turbines with open arms. They had some success convincing that committee that only a small percentage of residents living where wind farms are proposed have been vocally opposed to the turbine invasion of their communities. The common refrain in their testimony is “We don’t go where we aren’t wanted”. A few counties in western Kansas are held up as examples. Many of those wind farms have less than 10 homes under the entire footprint of the turbine complex. SB 325 will give the residents of any proposed windfarm footprint the right to self-determination. That is a right that we thought we already had. Please advance SB325 so that rural residents have the ability to protect themselves from this undesired industrial development.

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