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Senate Utilities Committee
Proponent testimony for SB 353

Chairman Thompson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony as a proponent of S.B. 353. Industrial wind energy seems to be booming in Kansas right now, and as a farmer and rural resident, I am very concerned about the lack of adequate considerations for non-participating landowners and protections for our Kansas landscape.

Industrial wind turbines are very large machines.. It is difficult to comprehend their actual size until you travel to a site and see how they compare to other structures in the area. When the air is right, I can see the individual turbines in the Soldier Creek project from outside Everest (approx 20-25 miles). On most any night, the sea of pulsing red lights on each individual tower in this same project are unmistakable on the western horizon.

Wind energy projects are neither universally accepted nor welcomed. Many people are for them and willingly sign the lease. Many people are against them and do not want them on their land so they don't sign on. The problem for the non-participating landowners and residents lies in the sheer size and scope of an industrial wind project. At 300-400 feet tall and scattered across the landscape for miles, unless a person owns a large number of acres and is lucky enough to have built their house in the center of that land, a turbine is as close as the next landowner who signs on and at a setback that is usually determined by the wind energy company.

That is a bitter pill to swallow for many folks.

As a resident of a county without zoning laws in place, siting decisions and setback requirements will be made at the county commission level and with the input of the county attorney. Our commission does a great job and our attorney is capable, but they have little to no experience with industrial wind projects and will be dealing with agents and attorneys from a multi-billion dollar company with many years of experience and company money to burn. As someone who won't sign a wind lease, I don't like my odds.

SB 353 attempts to address some of my concerns by setting some guidelines at the state level to ensure that industrial wind facilities will be built in such a way as to minimize the impact to people who don't buy in and also so as not detract from the inherent beauty of our state.