

Comments regarding SB 455
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Good Morning, I am Simon McGee... a landowner and rancher in the south central part of Wabaunsee County where I operate a summer grazing outfit on about 4,200 acres of native tall grass prairie. I am very concerned about the rapid movement towards the industrialization of the Flint Hills with wind energy development – all without adequate time for decision makers to gather and thoroughly analyze all of the available information and experiences of other countries, regions, and communities that have faced this complex issue.

I ask you to please work this Bill and pass it on to the full Senate for consideration. The moratorium is necessary to protect the property rights and property values of all Flint Hills landowners from the irreversible negative impact of uncontrolled industrial wind energy development.

Like most of my neighbors, I do not want someone else telling me what I can or cannot do with my property. However, I know that this argument is valid only up to the point that what I choose to do infringes on someone else's property rights. And surely a bunch of 350 foot plus industrial towers looming nearby, with lights blinking 24/7, will infringe on my rights and those of my neighbors and the entire community. Legally and morally, we just can't do whatever we darn well please without any regard for our neighbors. So, as good folks consider this form of industrial development we should ask: "what about the property rights of the vast majority of people without wind turbines?"

In addition to our property rights, what about property values? If industrial wind development occurs in the Flint Hills, including that part of the region that is currently in hay meadow or tillable ground, I am gravely concerned that the market value of our agricultural property – our native tall grass ranchland – is going to decline. Good Flint Hills pastures are selling for \$600-800 and more per acre...but those of us that operate this land know that the use value is only about \$250...and that's in a good year. So where is that extra \$350-550 per acre -or more- of value coming from? What is this intangible value? For some it's hunting and fishing, for others its conservation opportunities. It's the landscape, the scenery and the uncluttered skylines; yes, it's the viewshed. It's the privilege to live in a clean, safe, quiet place. It's good neighbors, fresh air and solitude. It is tourism and the Flint Hills ranching heritage. This intangible value could be many different things...but whatever it is, it is clearly and definitely creating real value in our property...its literally money in the bank. If industrial wind energy development is allowed in the Flint Hills, what will happen to that portion of our property value that is derived from these intangible things? Will our land values revert to strictly use value...\$250/acre? What will my banker do if property values start to decline? The effect on my balance sheet would be devastating.

With industrial wind developments could come eminent domain to force the installation of above and/or below ground transmission lines across our property...even if we don't want them. The project being promoted in Butler County would require 18 miles of interconnection lines to get to the transmission grid...much of that across property owned by folks who aren't a part of the project. The Munkers Creek project proposed in Wabaunsee and Morris Counties has been leased up in a checkerboard pattern...with no way to connect the project without either persuading unwilling landowners or by using eminent domain.

If industrial wind energy development is allowed to occur in the Flint Hills, what about the property rights of the overwhelming majority of us that, whether by choice or by location, will not receive payment for the industrial transformation of our agricultural lands? Not only will we not benefit ...our property will be devalued, our taxes and electricity rates will increase and, for those of us who's property stands between an industrial wind development and the electrical transmission grid, we will be exposed to the added insult of having eminent domain used to take away even more of our property rights in order to enable the development and destruction of the Flint Hills. Our ability to fully enjoy our lives and our property will be forever impaired and we risk losing our connection with our great ranching heritage.

So, please, listen to the comments today and then work this Bill and pass it on to the full Senate for consideration...our property rights and our property values depend on it! Ranchers throughout the Flint Hills are counting on you.