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Senate Utilities Committee

Proponent Testimony for SB353

Chairman Thompson and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB353. This bill offers much needed and long overdue protection for the many rural residents and landowners that are directly affected by the overwhelming push to install industrial wind turbines all across the state.

I strongly believe the state needs to put in place some serious rules regarding the process by which wind projects are developed, for the protection of both participating landowners and their neighbors. SB353 does just that by properly addressing such issues as shadow flicker, setback distances, noise levels, proper notification of affected residents, and a proper and well-funded decommissioning plan. My compliments to the authors of this bill. It is thorough, thoughtful, and goes a long way towards addressing the problematic issues that surround industrial wind turbine development in Kansas.

Let the counties decide? Yes, local government should have the final say in matters of industrial development. However, in the most rural of Kansas counties, county commissioners and other local government officials are ill-equipped to deal with the overwhelming prospect that large sections of their county could soon become an industrial wind project. They are no match for a multibillion-dollar company with a team of top flight attorneys,

backed with the blessings of the federal government and billions of dollars in federal subsidies. This is why it is so important for the state legislature to put in place some serious guidelines, or standards, to help these county officials protect the health and well-being of their citizens.

The opposition will say that these rules are too onerous and will make it too difficult to develop wind energy in Kansas. Not really. There is still a lot of open, very sparsely populated areas, especially in the western part of the state, that could easily be developed under the standards set by this bill. However, in the more populated rural areas of the state, this bill is necessary to protect the rights of citizens, while providing guidelines by which any future wind projects can be safely constructed and operated.

We all need to realize that even if you think industrial wind turbines are the greatest invention since sliced bread, there are still many places where they do not fit and are not wanted. Keep in mind that these modern turbines are huge! They can reach over 500' tall with 3 160+' rotating blades. A wind project usually consists of dozens, if not hundreds, of these huge structures stretching for miles. They profoundly alter the landscape - day and night. They also have a profound impact on the people that live near them. Given the tremendous physical size and scope of these developments, the State of Kansas must step in at some point and set some limits. That time is now!

I strongly urge each of you to vote yes on SB 353 and work to make it Kansas law!

Thanks for allowing me to testify.

Clif Heiniger