



Office of the County Executive

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Joint Hearing
Senate Committee on Commerce, Utilities, Energy, and Rail
Senator Jeff Plale, Chair
Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities
Representative Jim Soletski, Chair

Tuesday, May 11, 2009
11:00 a.m., 411 South
Opposition to SB 185 and AB 256

Dear Senator Plale, Representative Soletski, and Committee Members:

I'm here today to speak in opposition to these proposals which work to undermine the confidence people have in the value of local government and the even-handedness of their State government.

In the Manitowoc County area we are very interested in efficient new energy technologies. We host two valuable highly efficient nuclear plants (and if you're really serious about producing low cost electricity for a long time we would love to put one more between those two). Our workers manufacture the towers that support the wind turbines. And, the City of Manitowoc operates a new clean coal power plant in the middle of town, a block from my house, three blocks from the Courthouse.

We are "all in" on the energy economy.

The issue here is actually a fairly simple one. "Do you trust people in their local communities to make serious land use decisions on important issues?" These bills say very clearly that you do not.

Nearly five years ago when it became clear that the demand for wind power sites would include our area, Town and County government embarked on the intense process of trying to make the difficult land use policy decisions contemplated under existing state law. After a failed first attempt to create a suitable county wind power ordinance, the County Board took a "time out" by declaring a moratorium on projects while it convened a special study committee to write a new ordinance. That committee, a balanced mix of citizen and elected officials encompassing all the principal points of view, took significant public input and agonized over the implications of making wind tower siting decisions.

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After more than a year of serious deliberation their work product, a comprehensive wind power ordinance was overwhelmingly passed into law by the Manitowoc County Board in 2006. That both sides of the debate came away from the process a little unhappy with the results speaks highly of the quality of the work they did. It continues to be tested, defined, and refined according to the appropriate due process that is available at the local level for these issues. This would throw all that work away.

These bills are ultimately a power grab, couched in the usual excuses; artificially created minimum requirements for alternative power generation, speculative theories about man made global warming, impatience with local decision making, and frustration with due process.

I'm here today to stand up for those local officials and the process of making local decisions throughout the State. Their work and the work of similar groups of local officials, who took their responsibilities seriously and in good faith waded in to try address controversial issues in their communities should stand; not be washed away because "Monday morning quarterbacks" from 150 miles away don't like the result.

These proposals tell local officials to get out of the way, dodge the tough issues, and because people in Madison know better, you'll decide.

I urge you not to pass these bills.

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