

Members of the House Energy Committee:

My name is Dick Farnsworth and I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB5120 to 5123. I have seen the township permitting process for renewable energy up close and I can tell you that it isn't working. We need to make a change if we are to meet our goals, both in Michigan and nationally.

I received my degree in Electrical engineering from Michigan State University in 1969 and have worked in the field for 54 years. I live in Grand Rapids where I have owned my own business for 41 years. I also own a cottage and a 300-acre farm in Montcalm County.

For the last couple of years, I have watched with dismay the way that township officials have been treated in the six townships that were attempting to write or revise wind and solar ordinances in Montcalm County. There has been a small group of very loud and obnoxious people going to township meetings to harass and intimidate the members of planning and township boards. These elected officials have been trying to create ordinances that would allow wind and solar projects to be placed in their townships under responsible regulations. They were attempting to protect the property rights of local landowners and farmers by allowing them to participate in these projects if they choose. The additional income that these property owners receive could help them maintain their properties and help support their revenue stream during bad economic periods. It will bring much needed revenue to the townships, schools, and county. The townships initially attempted to accommodate legitimate concerns while still protecting farmers' land rights. Unfortunately, the only thing that would satisfy the anti-renewable energy crowd is no wind or solar projects, period.

Following the advice of paid lawyers and operatives from outside the county, opponents of wind and solar used the Michigan recall law to punish any official who refused to support restrictive, illegal ordinances. One township passed a restrictive ordinance with a vote of 4 to 1. That victory did not satisfy them, so they recalled the lone trustee who was brave enough to vote against the restrictive ordinance to send a message to the other township boards that they would be recalled if they didn't fall in line.

The trustee that was recalled was the only farmer on the board. He was a veteran who served in the Army Rangers all over the world and fought to protect our freedoms. Those freedoms include the right to have a different point of view and express that view without being intimidated and harassed -- **free speech**. The other basic freedom that was violated is the right to decide what you can do with your property. There have been 11 other recalls filed and more taking place in other parts of the state. This is not sustainable.

Farming is a tough business. My family has owned the farm since 1880 and we would like to continue to operate it as a farm. Unfortunately, the lease payments will not be able to cover the taxes and maintenance in the very near future.

We have signed a wind lease because we believe in renewable energy and knew it would be a big boost in income, allowing us to keep the property as a farm, even without a turbine. Opponents say they don't want wind and solar projects because it would disturb the rural nature of their environment. The irony is if they stop these projects, property owners like us will be forced to make some hard choices between keeping it as a farm or selling it off for development.

I have seen that climate change is real and **it is here now**. We are responsible for the damage we have done to our environment. I just finished a 2-week trip in the Canadian Rockies and was surprised by the state of the ice fields and glaciers. They will be gone in the next decade and that will cause many problems here in Michigan.

The State of Michigan has set a goal of 30% renewable energy by 2035. The energy companies have committed to shutting down fossil fuel generation and using more renewables. The auto companies, the major economic driver of the state, are switching their fleets to all electric. When I heard that the Governor was proposing a bill to move the siting of wind and solar projects from local townships to the Public Service Commission, I was skeptical. I did some research and discovered that the PSC does much more than set utility rates. They have a professional staff of engineers and scientists who have been making these kinds of decisions since the introduction of the railroads. As new technologies have emerged and improved our standard of living there has always been resistance to change.

Renewable energy is just the latest change we need to make for the common good of all the citizens of Michigan. Giving the responsibility to the PSC makes sense to me. Many of the township officials that I have talked to say they were unprepared to make these decisions and felt overwhelmed.

We know what needs to be done and I am asking that you support this bill to move the control of large wind and solar projects to the PSC.

Thank you!

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