



TOPEKA

SENATE CHAMBER

Senate Bill 86
Proponent Testimony
Senator Mike Thompson
Senate District 10

Chairwoman McGinn and members of the committee,

I stand in strong support of Senate Bill 86.

We expect government officials to act in the best interest of their constituents, placing personal benefit aside when making important decisions. The public also demands transparency and ethical behavior from elected officials, especially when making decisions that will forever change the landscape, economics, and community they live in. Some decisions are much bigger than others, and those decisions can create long-term negative impacts if officials ignore their fiduciary duties in favor of financial gain. Even the appearance of impropriety undermines the public trust.

Senate Bill 86 addresses these issues with regard to a couple of very impactful and long-term choices being faced by county officials tasked with determining the fate and future of their communities in deciding to accept or deny the implementation of industrial scale wind and solar facilities within their jurisdiction.

For the past 15 years or so, we have seen more and more industrial scale wind facilities installed across Kansas. With the increased subsidies coming from the Inflation Reduction Act, we will also see more and more large-scale solar facilities being sited within the state. Industrial scale wind and solar facilities require massive amounts of land that displaces farms and removes tillable land from production. The installation of these facilities can create bitter divisions within the community and expose adjacent land owners to health and safety risks. Those landowners need to know that their elected officials will actually listen to their concerns and make ethical decisions. But unfortunately, has not been the case in some instances.



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I have traveled across many areas of Kansas where counties were faced with these decisions. And I have heard horror stories about county commissioners who had signed lease deals with a renewable company and refused to recuse themselves from the decision making process...and in some cases sat in on executive sessions of planning meetings that resulted in approval of wind or solar facilities...in spite of overwhelming community oppositions. They placed personal benefit ahead of their fiduciary judgment. In some cases it was a family member of the official that had signed the lease, and influence peddling was involved. Think Hunter Biden.

Madame chairwoman, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that this type of corruption in Kansas ceases and restore the public faith in public officials by passing Senate Bill 86.

Sincerely,

Mike Thompson

Senator Mike Thompson
Kansas 10th District