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3/15/12 - Testimony for House Energy & Utilities - Opponent on HB 2446

Chairman Holmes and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am Zack Pistora, Legislative Director for Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club, and I thank you for the opportunity to address HB 2446, which both expands the definition of renewable energy to include stored energy from renewable energy sources as well as freezes the required renewable energy standard at 10 percent if Holcomb II is not yet constructed. In our mind, this bill provides a deficient course for economic and environmental advancement regarding renewable energy and a prosperous Kansas future.

The Kansas Sierra Club fully encourages the state to recognize the great utility of our renewable energy policy. Without the problems associated with burning fossil fuels for energy, such as pollution, price volatility, and land degradation, renewable energy usage adds many economic and environmental benefits.

First, clean, renewable energy makes sense economically. Renewable energy like wind, solar, and hydropower does not incur the current and future financial costs associated with expelling harmful pollutants, including climate-altering greenhouse gases. These costs comprise of fines of breaching clean air and water standards, health care costs from respiratory problems, and climate change impacts. Because renewable energy sources are everlasting and permanent, the production costs of renewable energy will be stable and exempt from price volatility like that of coal, oil, and gas. As we have seen, the biggest economic advantage would be from the added jobs and industry associated with the production, distribution, and maintenance of renewable energy. Already, Kansas is making valuable use of its great wind resource by becoming the top state for wind development projects this year. The economic potential for Kansas in a renewable energy economy is high, both for sustaining our own needs and exporting our renewable energy and associated industry practices to other places.

Next, remember that renewable energy preserves our health and ecosystem compared to fossil fuels. With little-to-no climate-altering emissions, air or water contamination, or land destruction, renewable energy represents power we can continue to use for heat and electricity that does not compromise our personal and ecological health and safety. By utilizing a greater amount of clean, renewable energy, the water, air, and land that we all depend on everyday can continue to be fresh and plentiful. It is important to keep our renewable energy standards intact, regardless of a coal plant's construction status, for these reasons.

HB 2446 creates a provision that would freeze the required renewable energy standard if the Holcomb II Coal-fired station is not built. The Kansas Sierra Club opposed the coal plant before and during Governor Parkinson's compromise in 2009, and we continue to oppose Holcomb II now. Coal plants across the nation are closing in part because of the expense of heavy pollution fines, and because we have cleaner and healthier means of generating power. Holding back the renewable energy standards to accommodate a controversial and costly coal plant would set our state back double. We cannot accept retroactive policymaking when our health, dollars, and environment are on the line. What advantage do we gain for our future by endorsing an out-of-date and out-of-touch energy source?

Kansas Sierra Club stands with Kansans everywhere in asking you to oppose HB 2446 and let politics stay out of good policymaking. Again, thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony. I hope you will consider our concerns.

Sincerely,

Zack Pistora
KS Sierra Club
"Be Smart, Be Green"

The Sierra Club is the largest grassroots national environmental organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enjoying the environment on Earth. Our Kansas Chapter represents the state's strongest citizen voice for the environment.