



March 19, 2019

Testimony in Support of House Bill-2317

House Energy, Utilities, and Telecommunications Committee

Chairman – Representative Joe Seiwert

Vice Chair – Representative Mark Schreiber

Ranking Minority – Annie Kuether

Committee Members

Good Morning to the Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today regarding House Bill 2317. This bill seeks to strengthen the permit requirements and notification requirements for Electric Utilities who seek to install or operate high voltage transmission lines in urban/residential areas. These additional protections are necessary to protect the rights of homeowners and residents as evidenced directly by the recent installation of high voltage transmission lines in the front yards and areas surrounding homes located in Central Northeast Wichita.

I would specifically like to speak with you today about how the lack of such protections have profoundly impacted the residents of the Central Northeast Wichita community and the value of the properties therein.

You will no doubt hear from Westar that these high voltage transmission lines are slated to carry the same electrical load as the smaller distribution line wooden poles that they replaced. You will also no doubt hear that exposure and proximity to these lines is believed to be safe; perhaps, no more dangerous than normal exposure to household appliances. You will also no doubt hear that the residents of the community who were 'directly' affected have been compensated adequately. But, as always, the devil is in the details.

I would like to directly address the impact on the Central Northeast Wichita community in the form of reduced property values. There are numerous studies available, notably a 2017 peer reviewed study by the Appraisal Institute, which speak to the loss of resale value on residential properties based on market analysis with the estimated loss in value ranging from 10 to 15% on the conservative side to up to 50% depending on the property's use, size, and uniqueness. Residential properties on small lots, within a city where purchasers could readily choose from other properties outside of the immediate vicinity of high voltage transmission lines could be expected to be among the most significantly impacted. And while Westar has taken some steps to provide some measure of compensation to 37 homes that now have



High Voltage Transmission line poles directly in their yards, they have taken no concrete steps to mitigate the loss of resale value to the dozens of other homeowners whose property values are affected by their decision to replace normal residential type distribution lines with High Voltage Transmission lines.

The residents in this community were not informed of this decision prior to the new lines installation. In the absence of the protections and notification requirements outlined in this bill, the homeowners and residents were not consulted and they had no opportunity to give input on a plan that would ultimately reduce their household net worth, and result in many families deciding to move out of the community altogether.

This action took what was already an economically depressed area and further suppressed the household net worth of its residents. Through eminent domain, they have altered the lots of several properties. New easements have changed some homeowners ability to build and make changes to their properties. But while these affects have made continued residency untenable for some, the actions taken provide a financial boon to would-be developers who can now increasingly have access to parcels of very low cost land for commercial properties which suffer statistically little to no economic impact as a result of their proximity to high voltage transmission lines.

Members of the committee, this is how a neighborhoods are gentrified. At the very least, homeowners should have the right to be notified and give input on any plans or decisions that would impact their property's use and/or value. Hb2317 provides that assurance. On behalf of this, and any future communities under consideration for such treatment, I strongly urge your consideration and support for HB2317.

Thank you,

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