

Testimony of Troy Coons on behalf of
Northwest Landowners Association
in favor of
SENATE BILL NO. 2289
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
February 2, 2023

Chairman Patten and members of the committee, thank you for taking my testimony into consideration today.

My name is Troy Coons and I am the Chairman of the Northwest Landowners Association. Northwest Landowners Association represents over 525 farmers, ranchers, and property owners in North Dakota. Northwest Landowners Association is a nonprofit organization, and I am not a paid lobbyist.

We support SB 2289 and agree that it is wise to consider a comprehensive statewide energy policy. We also appreciate that the language of this bill recognizes the importance of “developing synergy between energy and agriculture programs.” Toward that end, we have continually raised the alarm regarding the looming problem of orphaned and abandoned wells in our oilfields. This is a major concern for landowners because North Dakota is a less mature oilfield. This is a problem that every major oil producing government in North America has faced, and we are one of the first states that has the ability to get out ahead of the problem. Our regulators are asking you to take a wait and see approach, but we are trying to raise the alarm that the wait and see attitude is exactly what regulators in other jurisdictions have warned everyone will always fail. We would ask that this committee amend the current language of SB 2289 to add in our request for a study of the issue of abandoned wells and how other jurisdictions have addressed the issue, with the goal of getting out ahead of this problem so that it is not a problem in the end for the landowners and the taxpayers.

The language of the draft amendment would take the first step in ensuring that North Dakota does not make the mistakes that other oil producing jurisdictions have made by taking a wait and see approach. We support SB 2289 and request a do pass along with the proposed amendment.

Thank you,

Troy Coons
Northwest Landowners Association