Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, my name is Pete Silbernagel, I reside in Bismarck, and I am here to testify today in support of Senate Bill 2137.

In 2007, the North Dakota Legislature formalized energy policy and created the 16-member EmPower Commission. This group is charged with developing comprehensive energy policy recommendations for the state's diverse and growing energy industry. The commission is made up of representatives from the various state's energy industries and was meant to bring differing interests together for the good of our state and nation.

In looking back over these past 25 years the EmPower commission, along with the Executive Branch and Legislative Branch have done an outstanding job developing our energy resources. These assets include coal, oil, gas, hydro, wind, ethanol, biodiesel and transmission. Since 2007 North Dakota has become a leader in providing affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for our nation. The EmPower commission has been instrumental in all of these efforts to leverage our energy resources. There are many in this room today that played a role in the Empower Commission since it's inception. My thanks to each of you.

However, in spite of all of our state's energy development successes there remains one untapped and under developed resource in our state....solar power. I will never suggest or recommend that solar should replace any of our existing sources of energy as we strive to meet our state's and our nation's growing energy demands. I would suggest that solar can be another arrow in our quiver. Solar can help us meet our growing appetite for energy and it to can enhance our states position as a leader in energy production. There is a growing interest in developing the solar industry by the residents of this state. There are numerous examples of this enthusiasm and I have a few photos to illustrate this growing demand.

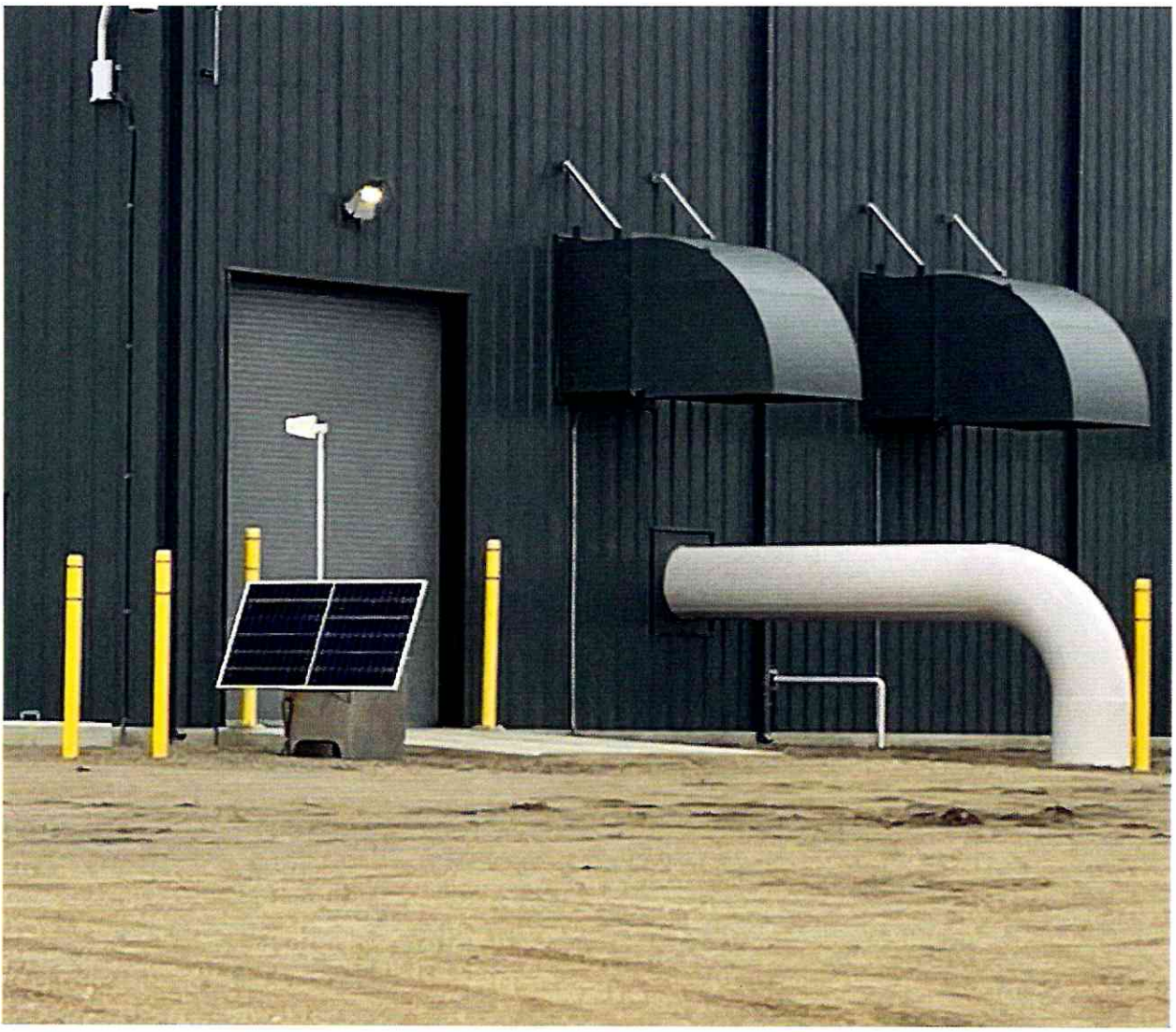
--Rural pasture wells powered by solar can be found across the state in great numbers. There certainly are hundreds and there may be a thousand or more. Solar power is a cost effective means for the ranchers of North Dakota.

--Residential installations are occurring in many communities. This system is located just a few blocks from my home in Bismarck.

--Apartment buildings equipped with solar generation are appearing in several of our metro areas. Again, located here in Bismarck.

--Commercial projects have been completed successfully in various communities across the state. I believe Starion Bank has solar installed at all their bank locations.

--Even the oil and gas industry has found applications for solar. This is a picture of the Dakota Access Pipeline pumping station located one and a half miles from my cabin. Notice the solar panels powering a battery pack for emergency lighting in case the power goes out? Imagine it, solar as a backup to when the grid goes down.



--There is growing activity in potential large scale solar generation projects. I am aware of several projects that are being researched at this time. More are on the horizon.

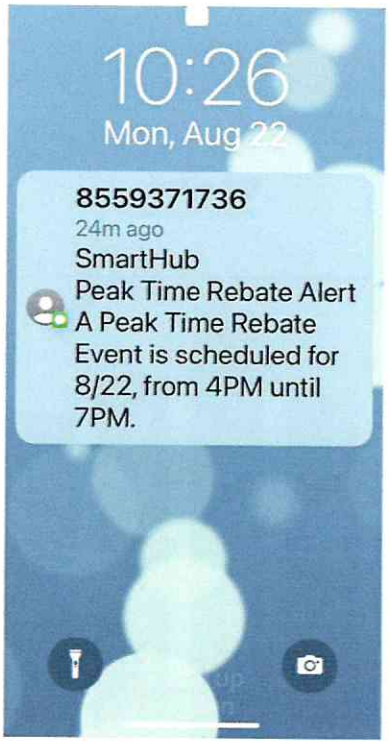
The interest in solar is alive in North Dakota and the drumbeat will only grow louder in the months and years to come. Simply put, solar has it's place in meeting our state's and nation's energy needs.

Three years ago, I installed a small solar system at my cabin west of Linton. My motivation was quite simple. I wanted to reduce my electric bill. I wasn't trying to save the planet, go off the grid or charge a vehicle. I simply wanted to lower my energy costs. After three years I can tell you the project has been a success and the payback on my investment should be about ten or eleven years. As the cost of electricity increases the payback could be even sooner.

This chart illustrates the monthly production of my system. As you can see output is lower in the winter months and peaks in the summer months. This production curve is emblematic of any solar installation in our state.

Peak solar supply coincides with the peak power demand of the summer months. I receive Peak Alerts on my phone numerous times throughout the summer at the same time I am selling my excess energy to Kem Electric. In effect I am supplying electricity at a time when the need is greatest.

# Capital Electric Peak Alerts




By virtually all metrics, inn the United States, North Dakota is at the bottom of the barrel in utilization of one of our greatest natural resources, solar energy. I have read the Empower ND Commission Energy Plan for 2022 and I can support most of the initiatives spelled out in the plan. However, the plan sorely lacks any clear initiatives or strategies to put our state on a path of solar energy development.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee by placing a member on the Empower Commission from the solar industry we can begin to integrate solar into the energy mix of our state's energy palette. Giving the solar industry a seat at the table does not give them an unfair advantage or a favorable subsidy. The solar industry is only seeking equal treatment. This bill would give solar a voice with coal, oil, gas, wind, ethanol, biodiesel, and hydro. It's often been said in this great building that "We don't pick winners and losers." By passing SB2137 you would ensure that this is the case in the energy arena.

Thank you for your time. I would also like to sincerely thank you for your service. I stand for any questions.