

Senate Bill 2116

Presented by: Jill Kringstad, Commissioner
Public Service Commission

Before: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Dale Patten, Chair

Date: January 17, 2025

TESTIMONY

Chair Patten and members of the committee, my name is Jill Kringstad, and I serve as a Commissioner on the Public Service Commission. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on SB 2116.

During the siting process, the Commission holds public hearings that include two primary components: (1) The evidentiary portion – which allows the applicant, the Commission, and intervenors to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses; and (2) The public input portion – this gives the general public a chance to share their views and issues, which the Commission considers in its decision-making.

In contentious cases, the evidentiary portion can stretch on for much of the day(s), often leaving little time for public input. This has sometimes resulted in members of the public leaving before sharing their thoughts or losing interest altogether. Additionally, for electric or pipeline transmission projects that require hearings across multiple counties, the current process often leads to duplicative presentations of evidence, creating inefficiencies in travel and witness testimony.

SB 2116 addresses these issues by giving the Commission the flexibility to hold separate public hearings and technical hearings. This change would allow the Commission to visit communities specifically for public input while conducting a single, consolidated evidentiary hearing on technical matters.

This updated approach offers several important benefits:

1. Better accessibility for public input: Public hearings focused solely on public input make it easier for impacted landowners to participate.
2. Streamlined scheduling: Consolidating technical hearings simplifies planning for all parties, including the Commission.
3. A clearer evidentiary record: This helps the Commission make faster decisions and supports quicker court resolutions in the event of an appeal.

It's also important to note that technical hearings would remain open to the public and are livestreamed on the PSC website ensuring transparency. Beyond these benefits, this change should reduce costs and legal fees for applicants and intervenors, benefiting all stakeholders.

Chair Patten, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I'm happy to answer any questions.