

Testimony in Opposition of SB 2208

Mr. chairman and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee. My name is Tim Leppert and I am here before you today, on my own behalf, to testify in opposition to SB2208.

My family and I farm near Edgeley in LaMoure county. Much of our family farm lies within the PSC approved corridor of the JetX 345 KV transmission line, connecting an Ottertail substation near Jamestown, to a MDU substation near Ellendale.

I have attended several of the JetX information meetings. I, and other landowners, were told from the outset that the transmission line was being built at the request of MISO for grid reliability and resilience. My family, and I'm sure many of my neighbors, understand the need for orderly development of grid infrastructure to serve a public benefit.

My brother serves as a Russell township supervisor. When JetX approached our township officers requesting a Conditional Use Permit, the supervisors approved the permit because they were lead to believe this facility was designed to serve the public benefit.

Over the last year and a half, the utility's narrative has changed. Recently, representatives of JetX have stated that the line is being built to also serve Applied Digital, a data collection facility near Ellendale. During a recent township meeting we were told that 345 KV line will have a capacity of approximately 1800 Mega Watts.

We have also learned of Applied Digital's recent partnership with an Australian asset management group (Macquarie Group). According to Applied Digital's website, the plan for future growth of the facility will take it from its present power consumption of 400 MW to a 2 GW facility.

To put this in perspective 1 GW would power 750,000 homes. Imagine the energy to power approximately 1.5 million homes going to serve one facility! Honestly, will that transmission line serve the public benefit? We and many of our neighbors have become skeptical of JetX's ever changing and less than transparent information.

As landowners we will be impacted by, not only the footprint of the transmission line, but we also understand that much of the generation will come from a large proposed wind farm and a rumored solar farm in our area.

My family and I love the vocation we have chosen - farming! We enjoy the open spaces, working together as family, spring calving, watching the spring migration of eagles and other birds, and taking a moment to take in a beautiful ND sunset. This bill is a heavy handed maneuver to destroy all that.

As I said, my brother serves as a township supervisor. We have experienced some very wet springs that have literally washed out culverts, ruined township roads and flooded farm yards. Without those grant funds mentioned in this bill, our township, like most townships, would be hard pressed to repair the damaged infrastructure.

The most heavy handed part of this bill is subsection 3c, page 5, beginning on line 28, which speaks to the withholding of those emergency funds from those political subs that exercise their right to address local citizen concerns with these large projects.

SB2208 removes a basic tenant of democratic governance - that which is driven by the consent of the governed. Like most farmers, that which is produced on our farm must get to market on well maintained township roads. These roads are critical not only to the conduct of agricultural production but to the quality of rural life.

Finally, the utility leases offered to landowners are forever! Again, speaking of the quality of life, if this line goes through, we will be forced to live with the impact of this high voltage electrical power for generations - It will affect our electronic equipment - such as cell phones, GPS and precision Ag guidance systems, there is the difficulty of farming around facility structures, the chronic noise, and the ultimate devaluation of the property, besides the cluttered view of our landscape.

Therefore, I humbly ask you to oppose this bill. Thank you for your time and I would stand for questions.

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