17.0854.01000

FISCAL NOTE STATEMENT

Senate Bill or Resolution No. SB 2278

This bill or resolution appears to affect revenues, expenditures, or fiscal liability of counties, cities, school districts, or townships. However, no state agency has primary responsibility for compiling and maintaining the information necessary for the proper preparation of a fiscal note regarding this bill or resolution. Pursuant to Joint Rule 502, this statement meets the fiscal note requirement.

Sheila Sandness Senior Fiscal Analyst

2017 SENATE TRANSPORTATION

SB 2278

2017 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee Lewis and Clark Room, State Capitol

> SB 2278 1/26/2017 27443

□ Subcommittee □ Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature Mary Munder

Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Relating to the obstruction of a highway.

Minutes:

Attachment #1

Chairman Laffen: Called the hearing of SB 2278 to order. Welcome Senator Campbell.



Senator Campbell: This bill is simple it is to just add something. Right now if you are hauling something on a road and something falls off your load it is your responsibility to stop and clean it up. This bill which is the Townships Associations' idea is to be able to charge that person that is responsible for the obstruction with the cost it takes to clean it up if they don't. I will refer any questions to Mr. Syverson who will answer any details.

Chairman Laffen: Questions for Senator Campbell.

Senator Nelson: There is another bill out there that is very similar to this one. How are you going to find this guy that left the mess?

Senator Campbell: Where we come from in our part, we get potato harvest or grain harvest and we end up tearing up the roads, especially in wet years, and the local township or county calls us and asks us and kind of forces us to re-gravel the 2 miles of the section before it gets to the highway and we do it because there is less funds in doing it that way.

Chairman Laffen: Senator Campbell, this bill says you would pay the cost if someone has to clean up behind you.

Senator Campbell: Yes.

Chairman Laffen: Does that include potato farmers that come out of a field and drop big black clumps of dirt with their 4-wheel drive tractors?

Senator Campbell: Yes, that's why we have scrapers and clean it up. Serious accidents can happen with some of those big chunks on a highway. It is all policed and controlled for that reason.

Senate Transportation Committee SB 2278 1/26/17 Page 2

Senator Clemens: What is the definition of an obstruction?

Senator Campbell; I will refer to Mr. Syverson but I think it is any debris.

Senator Clemens: Can it be any size then, like is a sugar beet an obstruction?

Senator Campbell: I am going to refer to Mr. Syverson. Good question.

Chairman Laffen: Any more questions for Senator Campbell. None. Further testimony in favor of SB 2278.

(5:22) Mr. Syverson, from the North Dakota Townships Association: See Attachment #1.

(6:42) Chairman Laffen: Does this have anything to do with what is going on in Morton County at all or is this necessary for something else?

Mr. Syverson: Morton County did not enter into this discussion. It actually came from County meetings in the north east. It has to deal with the big chunks of dirt on the roadways. If the farmer doesn't come and clean them off it is up to the township to hire a tractor to come clean it up. Trees falling down in a storm onto a roadway is another example...they have to cleaned up. If the farmer doesn't do it then the township has to.

Senator Rust: My question deals with your district that may charge the individual who is responsible. There has to be several times where you really don't know who is responsible. Can you address that? What kind of issues do townships face in knowing who did it but having to prove it is another matter entirely?

Mr Syverson: What we are talking about is a black streak coming out of say a sugar beet field resulting in piles of mud on the roadways or the highway. It's pretty easy to tell that that operation is responsible for it. We are not seeking a criminal action. Sometimes we know it came from a farmer's yard but we don't know who was doing the driving of the tractor.

Senator Nelson: So basically you want to know who did it so someone who knows what they are doing can clean it up, not the person who made the mess as they can cause more damage than they did in the first place. You want to be able to charge them for someone to come in and clean it up. Right?

Mr. Syverson: We are hoping that the person who dropped the mud on the road will clean it up themselves without any added cost.

Senator Nelson: But couldn't he do more damage to a gravel road than he's already done with dropping the dirt?

Mr. Syverson: Well we might lose a little bit of gravel but our contractors that we call lose some gravel too. That's why sometimes we ask the party who is responsible to do some regraveling.

Senate Transportation Committee SB 2278 1/26/17 Page 3

Senator Clemens: I am from the northeastern part of the state and the real hazard is when mud is left on the pavement the surface of the road becomes very slippery. Gravel is bad enough but on the highway the mud is a hazard.

Mr. Syverson: Yes, that is something that could be touched on. Our concern is that the big chunks of mud could up end a small vehicle and hitting them they could lose control.

Chairman Laffen: Any other questions for Mr. Syverson? None. Further testimony in favor? None. Opposed to SB 2278. None. Neutral testimony? None. We close the hearing on SB 2278

2017 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee Lewis and Clark Room, State Capitol

> SB 2278 1/26/2017 27444

□ Subcommittee □ Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature Mary Munder

Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Relating to the obstruction of a highway.

Minutes:

Chairman Laffen: Chairman reopened the hearing on SB 2278 after short break. Any more discussion? None.

Senator Clemens: Concerning SB 2278 I make a motion that we have a Do Pass

Chairman Laffen: Do I have a second?

Senator Campbell: Seconded

Roll Call taken: Yeas-5, Nays-1, Absent-0

Chairman Laffen: Motion passed:

Senator Campbell will carry the bill.



Date: /- 2/6-17 Roll Call Vote #: /

2017 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES BILL/RESOLUTION NO. "Enter Bill/Resolution No." 2278						
Senate Transportation				Comr	nittee	
	□ Sul	ocommi	ttee			
Amendment LC# or Description:						
🔀 Do Pass 🛛 🗆 As Amended	Do Pass Do Not Pass		 Without Committee Recommendation Rerefer to Appropriations 			
Other Actions:			□			
Motion Made By <u>Clemens</u> Seconded By <u>Campbell</u>						
Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No	
Chairman Lonnie J. Laffen	~		Senator Carolyn Nelson	~		
Senator Tom Campbell	V					
Senator David Rust	V					
Senator David Clemens	~					
Vice Chairman Jonathan Casper		V				
		I				
Total (Yes) <u>5</u>		No	D			
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If the vote is on an amendment, briefly	indicat					

Com Standing Committee Report January 26, 2017 1:20PM

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2278: Transportation Committee (Sen. Laffen, Chairman) recommends DO PASS (5 YEAS, 1 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2278 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.



2017 HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

SB 2278

2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee

Fort Totten Room, State Capitol

SB	2278
3/9/	/2017
#2	8952

SubcommitteeConference Committee

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Committee Clerk Signature	Ganette (I	Artes
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Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

A bill relating to the obstruction of a highway.

Minutes:

Attachments #1-2

Chairman Ruby opened the hearing on SB 2278.

Larry Severson, Mayville, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for Roseville Township in Traill County and the Executive Secretary of the North Dakota Township Officers Association, spoke to support SB 2278 and provided written testimony. See Attachment #1. 2:20

Representative Nelson: Could you give some examples of the type of obstructions that the people have dealt with?

Larry Severson: This bill originated in Pembina County dealing with piles of mud drug up on the road from beet fields, but it can be anything from mud, to tree branches falling off of trucks, old dishwashers, refrigerators, sofas, etc. It can be anything.

Representative Nelson: We are talking about highways and public streets. Are we also talking about unimproved section lines that we still have the easement to use?

Larry Severson: This bill specifies roads or highways. I would take that to mean the traveled path. It would be a traffic hazard not just an encroachment.

Representative Nelson: I was wondering if a farmer who pushed a rock over to an unimproved section line, would be covered by this?

Larry Syverson: That is not the intent of this bill. The intent is to safeguard the roadway.

Representative Paur: Is mud considered an obstruction?

Larry Syverson: In large chunks it can endanger a vehicle. Especially during the night, a small car could lose control because of big chunks of mud.

House Transportation Committee SB 2278 3-9-17 Page 2

Representative Paur: In Walsh County the county charges the farmers for cleaning the mud off the roads. They take care of that on their own with a county law.

Larry Syverson: That would be a similar occurrence. St. Thomas township and Pembina county found that when they billed the people responsible for it, most of them paid. Then others said, "Show us the law.".

Chairman Ruby: Who is the overseer of the road?

Larry Syverson: That is probably one of the supervisors who is appointed by the township.

Chairman Ruby: Since there is no mention of a dollar amount, do they just assume that they have to pay whatever it costs?

Larry Syverson: It is just the cost of removal. There is no fee or fine.

Chairman Ruby: Do you envision that the person who caused the obstruction would get a certain amount of time to address the problem before it gets done or charged by the county or the township?

Larry Syverson: I don't know what the time requirements would be for that.

Chairman Ruby: I have a landfill that is on a county road. When it is raining, the drivers are driving on clay, and all of the mud does not get knocked off before they get onto the county road. In the past we have had a complaint about mud on the road. We have gone out and scrapped the mud off with a loader. The farmers in the area can have mud on the road all the time, and nobody says anything about it. I have an issue with this not being applied to everyone. I have a concern how this will be equably enforced?

Larry Syverson: The equal application of the law is always a problem. If all else fails, there is always the court enforcement.

Representative Westlind: Does the highway include the right-of-way too (the road ditches)?

Larry Syverson: That is not the intention of this bill. It is a roadway issue.

Representative Jones: Would you be agreeable if we put a number in there to include the safe zone?

Larry Syverson: I would have to see, and that could be workable. We do have another amendment that is already changing some of the language.

Representative Jones: I assume that this is often dealing with emergency situations. Someone will be sent out to remove a hazard immediately because it is dangerous. If it something that is less hazardous, then the person that is in charge calls the person responsible to tell them there is problem. The responsible person could probably go and House Transportation Committee SB 2278 3-9-17 Page 3

remove the obstruction from the roadway at a much smaller cost than the county or township will charge. Will they get that opportunity? Did you have that discussion?

Larry Syverson: Having the person that is responsible for the obstruction would always be the preferable option. We do have in other areas of statute have the ability to deal with things that are in the right-of-way, but that is a 30-day process. You can't leave an obstruction on the roadway for 30 days to give the responsible party time to clear it. The law says we have to immediately remove it. It doesn't give much chance to contact anyone else. Overnight a dangers obstruction could be hit by a motorist, and they could be killed.

Representative Dobervich: Would this apply to all highways, including the interstates?

Larry Syverson: It would apply to all highways.

Representative Dobervich: There are often large chunks of tires on the roads from semis. Who currently is responsible for cleaning that up, and if this should pass, who would be responsible for cleaning that up?

Larry Syverson: I believe the Department of Transportation crews take care of that. I don't know that there is any thought of compensation for that.

Representative Schobinger: My concern with this bill is the part that says the charge may become part of their property taxes. Why did you want the amount that is owed to become part of their taxes?

Larry Syverson: That particular passage is found in the mowing statute. The landowners are required to mow their township road ditches. If someone else has to do it, it is applied to their taxes. The idea was to handle this in the same manner.

Representative Sukut: How often does something get put on the highway and blocks traffic, but there is no way to know where it came from? In that situation what good does this bill do?

Larry Syverson: Most of the time we don't know where the obstruction comes from. But when you see a muddy track coming out of a sugar beet field, you know that those chunks of mud came from that field and that farm operation. The St. Thomas township would like that farmer to pay for the bill of pushing that mud off of the road, not everyone else in the township.

Representative Sukut: So, we are not trying to solve all of the problems here, just the ones that are specific problems that we are able to identify?

Larry Syverson: Yes.

Representative Owens: Isn't this similar to our current litter bill? If you know who put it out there, then you will charge them for removing it, but there are many times that you don't know who to charge, then you will wind up cleaning it up anyway. Is that true?

House Transportation Committee SB 2278 3-9-17 Page 4

Larry Syverson: It is exactly true. We do what we can. An occasional incident doesn't add up to so much, but when you have a wet harvest and mud getting on the roads from sugar beet fields, it can add up to be quite a bit. Most of them do pay, but there are some who won't. The existing statute doesn't put any of the responsibility on the person who caused the obstruction, it is all the responsibility of the road overseer.

Representative Paur: Most of the people in this committee are west of the Valley and don't realize what a problem this is in the Valley during sugar beet and potato harvest. The roads become dangerous with the amount of mud that gets on them. Especially with a year like last year. Once you get out of the valley, it is probably not an issue because most harvest isn't done in mud like sugar beets and potatoes. Am I correct on that?

Larry Syverson: The Red River Valley soil is very peculiar when it gets wet. It is greasy, but yet it will work into a solid mass which can be durable. It is both concrete-like and grease-like.

Representative Westlind: Could this be handled on a county basis like the mowing of the roadways, or does it need to be a state law?

Larry Syverson: The mowing is based on a state statute.

There was no further support to SB 2278.

There was no opposition to SB 2278.

Arvid Winkler, Cuba Township in Barnes County North Dakota spoke in a neutral capacity on SB 2278. Written testimony was provided. See Attachment #2, pages 1-5. 27:00

There was no further testimony.

The hearing was closed on SB 2278.

2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee

Fort Totten Room, State Capitol

SB 2278
3/10/2017
#29040

□ Subcommittee □ Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

A bill relating to the obstruction of a highway.

Minutes:

Attachment #1

Chairman Ruby brought SB 2278 back before the committee.

Representative Owens provided an amendment, **#** 17.0854.01001. See attachment **#**1. The purpose of the amendment is to reduce the ambiguity of the bill, and to make sure there is no punitive charge. It is restricting the charge to removing the obstruction from the roadway.

Vice Chairman Rick C. Becker moved the amendment (17.0854.01001). Representative Jones seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

Representative Weisz moved a DO PASS as amended on SB 2278. Representative O'Brien seconded the motion.

Representative Weisz: The obstructions on these roads had become an increasing problem. I like the amendment because it makes it clear that it isn't punitive. It is good that the person who caused the obstruction will have to be responsible for the cost of removal. These roads are open to the public and have to be kept clear. The liability issue for the counties and townships is starting to go through the roof.

Representative Jones: Is this bill basically just dealing with highways and township roads that have an obstruction, and then political unit will move it and charge the person responsible if possible?

Representative Weisz: That is correct.

House Transportation Committee SB 2278 3-10-17 Page 2

Representative Jones: I would hope they would try to notify the people who are causing the obstruction and give them a chance to clear it before they do it themselves and charge the person responsible.

Chairman Ruby: There is definitely a difference between a nuisance and a safety hazard.

Vice Chairman Rick C. Becker: Does anyone have any concern about the aspect that the overseer determines who is responsible and can charge them, and then that amount of money can be assessed on the tax? Do you think that there could be a, "He said; she said," kind of a situation? Is it possible that the overseer would then say the person is responsible and charge them? Since it is not a crime, there is no place to have recourse if you are the person accused of being responsible for obstructing the highway.

Chairman Ruby: It would be a civil matter.

Representative Weisz: The overseer would have the responsibility to remove the obstruction, and the district would have the responsibility to charge them. It could still end up in court if the person accused disputed the charge.

Representative Grueneich: What happens when the operator or farmer isn't the land owner?

Representative Westlind: Believe me, if a renter did something that caused the land owner to be assessed a fine; he would get it back in the rent.

Representative Paur: The way I remember the testimony; they are charging the land owners for clearing the roads. It is just that some refuse to pay. This just allows the ability to put it on the taxes.

Representative Weisz: The way the bill is written; you can only apply the bill to the taxes if **the person responsible** is the land owner.

Representative Schobinger: I fundamentally disagree with being able to add something to someone's property taxes for something that happens on a roadway.

Chairman Ruby: It is quite common. They can do this for mowing.

Representative Schobinger: That is not on the roadway; it is in the ditch.

Chairman Ruby: It is still the landowner's responsibility. In town if you don't mow your grass, you can be assessed on your taxes, or if you don't pay your garbage bill.

Representative Schobinger: I just think it is wrong. I will vote against it for that reason.

Representative Weisz: The property taxes are **already paying** for the removal of the obstruction. So, it is just a difference between **everyone** in the political subdivision paying for it, or the **landowner who caused the obstruction**.

House Transportation Committee SB 2278 3-10-17 Page 3

Representative Schobinger: I don't disagree with the responsible party being charged. I just don't think they should add it to your property tax.

Representative Jones: I think we should be cautious with how we proceed with adding something like this. I wonder if we couldn't just strike the part about adding it the land owner's taxes.

Representative Weisz: Again, it can only be applied to the property taxes of the individual responsible. We already do this in many other areas. If the person responsible doesn't pay for it, **who will pay for it**? Everyone's property taxes will. I think the people in the subdivision would want the responsible person pay for removing the obstruction, rather than taxing everyone.

A roll call vote was taken: Aye 10 Nay 4 Absent 0 The motion carried.

Representative Weisz will carry SB 2278.

3/10/1700

17.0854.01001 Title.02000 Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for Representative Owens March 9, 2017

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2278

Page 1, line 9, replace "<u>charge</u>" with "<u>seek recovery of costs incurred for the removal of any</u> <u>obstruction from</u>"

Page 1, line 11, replace "charge" with "removal cost"

Renumber accordingly

			Date: Roll Call	3-1 Vote #: _	0-	7
2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES BILL/RESOLUTION NO. <u>SB 227</u> 8 House <u>Transportation</u>						
Amendment LC# or Descr	iption:					
	dopt Amendment o Pass Do Not s Amended Place on Consent Cal Reconsider		 □ Without Committe □ Rerefer to Appro □ 		nmend	lation
[,		conded By			
Representati	ves Yes	No	Representative		Yes	No
Chairman Dan Ruby	-		Rep. Gretchen Dobe	rvich		
Vice Chair. Rick C. Be	cker		Rep. Marvin Nelson			
Rep. Bert Anderson			X			
Rep. Jim Grueneich Rep. Terry Jones			A 10	X		
Rep. Emily O'Brien				111		
Rep. Mark Owens				. 0		
Rep. Gary Paur			N 10% DV .	1		
Rep. Randy Schobinger						
Rep. Gary Sukut			100			
Rep. Robin Weisz						_
Rep. Greg Westlind			-			

Total (Yes) _____ No _____

Absent

Floor Assignment

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

17.0854.01001

				Date: <u>3</u> Roll Call Vote #:	-17			
2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES BILL/RESOLUTION NOSS								
House Transpor	tation				Com	nittee		
		🗆 Sut	ocomm	ittee				
Amendment LC# or [Description:							
Recommendation:					lation			
Motion Made By Weisz Seconded By O'Brien								
Represe		Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No		
Chairman Dan Ru		V		Rep. Gretchen Dobervich				
Vice Chair. Rick C				Rep. Marvin Nelson	V			
Rep. Bert Anderson								
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Rep. Terry Jones							
Rep. Emily O'Brien	V						
Rep. Mark Owens	V						
Rep. Gary Paur							
Rep. Randy Schobinger							
Rep. Gary Sukut	V						
Rep. Robin Weisz	V						
Rep. Greg Westlind	\bigvee						
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Total (Yes)	10	No	4				
Absent	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·						
Floor Assignment							
the vote is an amondment, briefly indicate intent:							

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

- SB 2278: Transportation Committee (Rep. D. Ruby, Chairman) recommends AMENDMENTS AS FOLLOWS and when so amended, recommends DO PASS (10 YEAS, 4 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2278 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.
- Page 1, line 9, replace "<u>charge</u>" with "<u>seek recovery of costs incurred for the removal of any</u> <u>obstruction from</u>"

Page 1, line 11, replace "charge" with "removal cost"

Renumber accordingly

2017 TESTIMONY

SB 2278

Support SB 2278

5132278 1-26-17 AHAchment # 1 pg. 1

Senate Transportation Committee

January 26, 2017

Good morning Chairman Laffen and Committee members.

I am Larry Syverson from Mayville, I am the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for Roseville Township in Traill County and I am also the Executive Secretary of the North Dakota Township Officers Association. NDTOA represents the 5,600 Township Officers that serve in more than 1,100 dues paying member townships.

Our membership passed a resolution this last December at our 50th annual convention that we should seek to get 24-06-31 amended to allow for collection of cost for the removal of the obstruction mentioned.

24-06-31. Obstructions in highway.

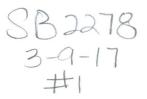
Each overseer of highways having personal knowledge, or on being notified in writing, of any obstruction in the highway or public street in the overseer's district immediately shall remove or cause any such obstruction to be removed.

The statute calls for the obstruction to be removed immediately with no mention of recovering cost. It is not always known who is responsible for causing or placing an obstruction but if it is apparent who is responsible it is not fair that all the tax payers have to bear the costs.

We believe that individuals that cause or place obstructions or hazards on roads through their intention or recklessness should be expected to pay the cost of removing it. We are not seeking any punitive damage just the cost.

Chairman Laffen and Committee members the North Dakota Township Officers Association requests your favorable recommendation for SB 2278.

Thank you. I will try to answer any questions you may have.



Support SB 2278

House Transportation Committee

March 9, 2017

Good morning Chairman Ruby and Committee members.

I am Larry Syverson from Mayville, I am the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for Roseville Township in Traill County and I am also the Executive Secretary of the North Dakota Township Officers Association. NDTOA represents the 5,600 Township Officers that serve in more than 1,100 dues paying member townships.

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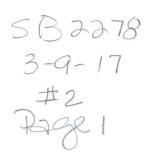
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We believe that parties that cause or place obstructions or hazards on roads through their intention or recklessness should be expected to pay the cost of removing it. We are not seeking any punitive damage just the cost.

Chairman Ruby and Committee members, the North Dakota Township Officers Association requests your favorable recommendation for SB 2278.

Thank you. I will try to answer any questions you may have.



House Transportation Committee

SB 2278

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March 9, 2017

Arvid Winkler

Page 2

May name is Arvid Winkler. I am a resident of Cuba Township in Barnes County North Dakota. I am educated as a civil engineer. I worked for the Federal Highway Administration for over eight years in Colorado where I became a Registered Professional Engineer. Part of that time was spent working with those beloved federal auditors.

After returning to North Dakota in 1973, I served as the Cuba Township Assessor for 33 cycles beginning in 1977. At first you just got elected to the job. Then you had to be tested and certified. To maintain certification required annual training.

I understand the need for SB 2278. My concern is whether or not it goes far enough to solve the current problem.

My experience with highway safety goes back to the Lyndon Johnson administration.

Just because certain laws are on the books does not necessarily mean that they will get enforced.

It appears that a certain mentality has developed wherein some township supervisors feel they can do whatever they want.

My understanding is that the oath of office is an agreement to uphold the laws created by the legislative process as provided by the constitution.

My bad experiences have been along section lines which are considered to be open to public travel.

I feel that man made obstructions that appear to be permitted as a means of keeping hunters out of the area, and just putting up with the associated inconvenience as a part of farming activities, should not be permitted to remain.

What is the penalty for not enforcing the century code?

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Page 4

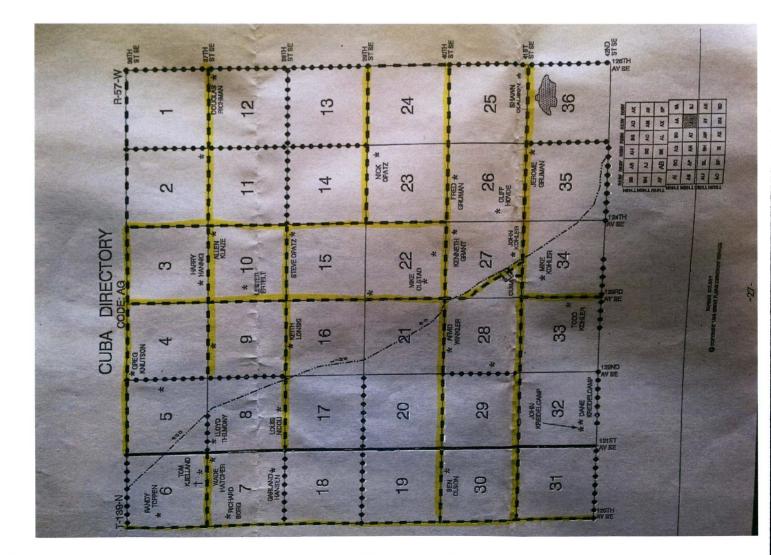




Page 5



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17.0854.01001 Title. Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for Representative Owens March 9, 2017

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2278

Page 1, line 9, replace "<u>charge</u>" with "<u>seek recovery of costs incurred for the removal of any</u> <u>obstruction from</u>"

Page 1, line 11, replace "charge" with "removal cost"

Renumber accordingly