

**Testimony of  
Deb Walworth  
Interim Taxation Committee  
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Senator Hogue and members of the Interim Taxation Committee my name is Deb Walworth. I am the Executive Director of the Prairie West Development Foundation in Beach, North Dakota.

It has been brought to my attention that the Interim Taxation Committee plans to discuss the abolition of the Jobs Development Authority (JDA). At a most pivotal time in North Dakota's history, with a robust state economy, I can see where some might think that because of the number of jobs available it is time to do away with an entity that develops jobs.

However, the opposite is actually true. The ramp up of oil activity in the western part of the state requires action towards diversity. Whose job will it be to work on that? City and county auditors will not have the time to do it. The state will not have the time to do it.

The western portion of the state has been non-active for 70 years with out-migration and less than attractive job offerings. North Dakota was so far behind the eight ball, we couldn't see the curve. All the action taken in the past 15 years to bring North Dakota forward has finally paid off. I'm sure the North Dakota Legislature is aware that the oil boom is only a fraction of the economic uptick. It has been the hard work of the Legislature working with the economic development corporations and JDAs that has found traction.

It is of utmost importance, at this point in time, to backfill with diverse occupations. Without a JDA or economic development corporation driving options to diversify some of western North Dakota's rural areas, there would be a train wreck on the horizon. The entire state can see a benefit of the programs put into place to grow the state. Now is not the time to give up—we haven't made it to the top yet.

The largest four to six cities tend to be able to hire whoever they need to accomplish whatever comes up. It's the small rural communities of 1,000 to 5,000 that rely on JDAs and economic developers. Along with the ability to work to diversify the economy, the JDA offices provide the support for businesses to access programs at Bank of North Dakota and other programs. Just because the state is finally moving forward, now is not the time to change boats.

As a state we really need to focus on the major issues to keep North Dakota moving forward and not get sidetracked by something that is working for the benefit of the entire state.

Sincerely,  
Debra Walworth, Executive Director  
Prairie West Development Foundation  
PO Box 784  
Beach, ND 58621