

Troy Coons
Northwest Landowners Association
House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
Testimony for SCR4007
March 25, 2021



Good afternoon Chairman Kasper and members of the committee, thank you for taking my testimony into consideration today. My name is Troy Coons and I am the Chairman of the Northwest Landowners Association. Northwest Landowners Association represents over 560 farmers, ranchers, and property owners in North Dakota. Northwest Landowners Association is a nonprofit organization, and I am not a paid lobbyist.

I am here to testify in opposition to Senate Concurrent Resolution 4007. Our organization would normally find ourselves aligned with all of the agricultural groups because our members are primarily farmers and ranchers. But over the past several years, our organization has learned first hand the importance of maintaining the foundational structures of our constitution and the checks and balances it provides.

We have been engaged in numerous debates about the issue of use of a landowners' pore space by the energy industry. We strive to work in cooperation with industry to reach a fair result. We are not always successful. And in these debates, we have often found ourselves on the other side of the table from the Industrial Commission. For that reason, it is concerning that we would place the entire Industrial Commission on this Board, because this Board is a surface owner, just like we are. In our own litigation, we ended up dismissing the Dept. of Trust Lands because the Attorney General determined it had a conflict of interest representing both the Department and the Industrial Commission given they had potentially opposing interests. If one of these Boards sits on the other Board, these conflicting interests would be difficult or impossible to separate out.

Because of these concerns, we urge a do not pass on this resolution. If the makeup of the various boards is a concern, we do support the idea of more comprehensively studying and considering the makeup of the various boards and attempting a comprehensive solution to the extent there are any concerns.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Troy Coons".

Troy Coons, Chairman
Northwest Landowners Association