

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

My name is Leona Somerfeld, my family farms and ranches in the Power area. My grandchildren are the 6th generation on this place which was homesteaded 102 years ago. We currently have four generations living on this land. I am the only one who could be here today, we are in the middle of calving season.

My family has a problem, we need your help, our farm and ranch is under siege, this is not the first time we have dealt with progress. We have given up land for country roads, secondary and interstate highways, a railway, telegraph lines, telephone lines and buried cable, rural electrification lines, Tri-County water system lines, oil pipelines, a missile site and transmission lines. So we are not opposed to progress, we deal with progress daily. All of this progress was for the good of our neighbors and ourselves.

Today MATL, a private, for profit, foreign company wants to build another high voltage transmission line paralleling an existing transmission line on our private property. With MATL we have been trespassed upon, bullied, lied to and misinformed, the game of good cop bad cop has been played, we have been insulted, harassed and finally threatened with eminent domain all because we would not sign their documents.

We had valid questions and concerns about this company and where they wanted to place their line. Because of past experience with transmission lines, we knew what we were dealing with working around the poles. MATL wanted to put 40 to 60 poles on farm fields and pastureland, approximately 7 miles of land with poles on it and needing to access other land to get to the building sites. These poles are there for eternity. We need to farm and work around them, we get to look at them, we get to have high voltages humming around us and our livestock. And our property values decrease. We want our property to increase in value not be devalued.

Yes, we had questions, and we did not get one straight answer from any MATL representative. All we ever heard was, we need you to sign this so we can move forward, we have deadlines to meet. MATL made an offer for all these poles of \$4200.00, we told them that was an insult, their next offer was \$32,000.00. We are being manipulated with our own tax dollars. This is where MATL differs from the rest, not one watt of this electricity will be used by me or my neighbors. The profits will go back to a foreign entity in a foreign country. We all are concerned about jobs, but the question is what kind of jobs and how many permanent new jobs for Montanans will MATL provide? HB 198 gives any company, public, private, or foreign who gets a permit in hand, the ability to make everyone's private property their own playground to put whatever they want on our last best place.

At the end of the day we would ask this of you, did you come here with an open mind, did you listen to the testimonies, did you educate yourselves on all the facts and issues, and are you listening to the taxpaying voters of this great state?

Myself and my family opposes HB 198 because it takes away our private property rights and our constitutional rights to due process. Our goal is to pass this land down to the future generations as a working farm and ranch. It should be the landowner's right to decide what his property should be used for.

Thank you, please vote No on HB 198.

Leona and Dave Somerfeld and family
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