

Senate Natural Resources Committee

Senator Debby Barrett – Chair, Senator Greg Hinkle – Vice Chair, Senator Christine Kaufmann – Vice Chair

Senators John Brenden, Brad Hamlett, Verdell Jackson, Jim Keane, Cliff Larsen, Jim Peterson, Donald Steinbeisser, Mitch Tropila, Chas Vincent, Edward Walker, and David Wanzenried

January 31, 2011

Re: Senate Bill No. 208

Dear Senators,

I oppose Senate Bill 208 as proposed. This is a land use issue that should be taken seriously and give careful thought and deliberation. It will involve private, state and federal land ownership and will carry the power of condemnation of those lands for "greater public good."

The implications of such a sweeping proposal to designate one mile wide swath for linear facility siting corridors in the state should be done right the first time. "Measure twice, cut once"- great advice for permanent establishment of an energy corridor.

If the hurried legislation of SB206 is adopted and the creation of a mile wide corridor is based on the current siting work being done by the D.E.Q. on Northwestern Energy's proposed MSTI 500kV transmission line, it will set precedent for a very poorly planned power corridor.

I see tremendous problems with the impact of this change in the Whitehall area. Just looking at land area on the south end of Bull Mountain, where the Golden Sunlight Mine has established operations, Interstate 90 runs, and the Jefferson River Slough and wet lands are, one must ask: where is there room for several 500kV lines and perhaps gas pipelines as well? There are about 1000 people along this area who will suddenly be placed in the corridor who have not had an effective chance to have their concerns heard. This forces the use of economically productive land in counties that are predominately public land.

We need to take effective action on Montana's energy policy and create one that's Montana friendly, one that doesn't sacrifice the economic stability of the people living here right now, making their livelihoods here and contributing to the state tax base.

There was a rush to tap Federal stimulus money to help finance upgrading the western energy grid, maybe well intended, but can you see the unintended sacrifice forced on so many people in a concentrated area in a rural state for a project that give them absolutely no benefit. This is job destruction. Most folks already know Montana is a moneymaker when it comes to harnessing energy from the wind. The race is on to build, but will the residents of this area of the state be left stripped of the fruit of their labor, the ability to make economic use of their own property and have a say in their own future? Government that boasts responsible action on behalf of its people can not be so deaf and blind to them.

Please table this bill.

Respectfully,

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