

Dear Senate Finance Committee members,

I have listened to your hearings and am impressed with your questions and your willingness to hear the lay person's perspective and experience. Having been through the beginnings of the siting process and having been in communication with town board members I can vouch for it having been a confusing, anxiety-producing experience that has led to tension among even good friends in our community. No one seems to know which end is up and our town boards were of the belief that no matter their input, decisions were made at the PUC level and town input easily overridden. Considering the time and expense board members did not see the value of filing. They knew the term "substantial deference" but didn't believe it held much weight. Town boards are quite overwhelmed these days and also having challenges filling vacancies with community members who have the time and expertise to serve.

All this brings me to several asks:

1- Can you please sunset 248a for only one year so we have time as you have suggested to assemble stakeholders to study and report? Then there would be an opportunity next session to amend 248a using H.70 and your report as a departure for further discussion and decision-making.

2- At the end of the stakeholder process/report, can you consider requiring a training video that would housed online for town boards and for town citizens to view? A clear walk-through the process would be so helpful and it could be updated as necessary.

3- And lastly could you consider setting set-backs from residences as this would end the inevitable arguing in towns over siting near residences and the bad feeling that results? Or make at least make recommendations in this area?

The recent NH study and several others say 1640 feet is "safe" and this may be realistic in rural areas but not in urban ones. This is such a sticky area and causes accusations of "nimbyism". However, when it's your health that is at issue and confronting you squarely, I think it's unfair to call it "nimbyism". And I would say town boards have a grave responsibility to keep their citizens as safe as possible within the boundaries in which we all must function.

Sincerely, Connie Colman, Warren, VT

PS Could it be that the reason the PUC can claim that they "NEVER" override opposition from select boards and planning commissions is because they've had so few town board or citizen filings? It may be that the process needs more clarification and simplification to ease the process for citizen and town input.