

Received via e-mail on April 19, 2016

April 18, 2016

Vermont House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

Re: S – 230

Dear Chairman Klein and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to urge you to reconsider adding noise limits to this legislation and to not direct the Public Service Board to undertake rulemaking for the following reasons:

Vermont currently permits wind projects to operate at 45 decibels outside of homes. 45 decibels and higher is recognized as intolerable to a segment of the population living near wind projects around the world. In 2012 Maine took a step in the right direction by including a special section for turbine noise in their regulations and reducing the nighttime level from 45 to 42 decibels. In December 2015 New Hampshire reduced the nighttime level from 45 to 40 decibels using a collaborative process that included citizens and wind developers.

Numerous studies, and direct testimony to your committee, has shown that wind turbine noise complaints begin to escalate above 35 decibels. As you have seen from direct testimony, those who complain have little hope of improvement. Not everyone complains, even if their lives are severely impacted by turbine noise, because once the turbines are installed, complaining is a waste of time. Some people are more sensitive, or become sensitized over time to the low frequency noise that you have heard described as driving with your back windows down. Most of us put the windows up rather than tolerate the thumping sensation. Some people are better able to tolerate turbine noise – not all humans are built the same. Those on the more sensitive end of the spectrum deserve the same consideration and respect as anyone else.

The legislature, by envisioning a future 30 years hence fueled by renewable energy, has inadvertently created this problem. The architects of such complex and far reaching legislation should acknowledge this relatively minor problem with their

plan and correct it. There is a simple solution, replace 45 dBA with 35 dBA. There will be no need for complicated complaint procedures at the DPS, which ultimately provide no relief, because complaints will be a thing of the past.

Sending this issue to the PBS for an adjudicative rulemaking hearing is unnecessary, but more importantly it creates a seriously unbalanced playing field, just as the PSB permitting process currently puts average citizens at a severe disadvantage. Imagine the same people who testified before your committee about their experiences with turbine noise going up against the wind industry with its relatively unlimited resources to hire lawyers, acoustics experts, even doctors – who will take the side of the industry that pays them. How can Vermont's wind turbine victims be more equitably treated in that forum than by your committee?

Vermont takes pride in leading by example on issues such as GMO labeling and Renewable Energy. Let's lead by example on responsible noise limits for future wind projects.

Respectfully,

Steve Thurston

Ferrisburgh