



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF WISCONSIN

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TO: Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities
Senate Committee on Commerce, Utilities and Rail

RE: Support AB 899/SB 544 Uniform Wind Siting Criteria

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin supports adoption of Uniform Wind Siting Criteria, AB 899 and SB 544.

Wind might be the best renewable energy resource our nation has. Wind power is growing at 25-30% per year in the U.S., but not in Wisconsin. This is not for lack of wind development projects. Currently wind development is reviewed under standards and timelines that often differ from one jurisdiction to another. This is one barrier that legislators can address to promote the siting of more wind systems in our state.

These bills require the Public Service Commission (PSC) to promulgate administrative rules on standards on siting, installation and operation of wind-powered generation projects. The PSC already reviews wind projects over 100 Megawatts.

The rules would deal with visual appearance, setback distances, decommissioning, electrical connections to the power grid and interference with radio, telephone or television signals. These are issues that apply to all wind projects. They are also technical issues that are best addressed by the lead state agency regulating electric generation, the PSC.

Under these bills, uniform standards would be used throughout the state by local units of government. Local communities benefit from the expertise of the PSC in setting the standards and applicants benefit from a level playing field of standards with the certainty of a prescribed timeline.

Importantly, local governments would retain their authority to protect public health and safety. They also can continue as the primary reviewer of large wind systems. Local jurisdictions can enact an ordinance to review construction or operation of a wind system that must incorporate the uniform standards. In this way, applications for large wind systems, projects ranging from at least one Megawatt to 100 Megawatts, are subject to local government review. After completing the local process, aggrieved parties, whether wind developers or other affected parties, have the right to appeal to the PSC to review the local government decision to approve, reject or impose restrictions on the wind project. The PSC decision is subject to Chapter 227 review.

The League finds that there is a fair balance of transparency between local and state bodies who will need to act on siting issues in AB 899/SB 544.

We note that these bills are modeled on some aspects of the Wisconsin Livestock Siting Act (s. 93.90. Wis. Stats.). The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is the lead agency under the Livestock Siting Act. That law has been implemented for almost two years now. Please log onto the DATCP website to see the array of fact sheets and training available to farmers and local officials on the uniform siting standards. The first annual report on implementation of that law is also very instructive on how to implement uniform state standards, http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/arm/agriculture/land-water/livestock_siting/pdf/ATCP51AnnualReport.pdf

As the lead agency for wind systems under these legislative bills, the PSC will need to assure that extensive educational outreach efforts are undertaken. Local units of government will want to understand and learn how to implement these new uniform state standards. Applicants will want to know how their projects will be reviewed by local governments.

We urge the Legislature to adopt AB 899/SB 544 to remove one more barrier to siting additional wind turbines.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the position of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin on enhancing wind generation in Wisconsin.