



WESTERN DAKOTA ENERGY ASSOCIATION

February 4, 2021

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Testimony of:

Geoff Simon, Lobbyist #144
in support of HB 1455
House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Chairman Porter and Committee members:

On behalf of the city, county and school district members of the Western Dakota Energy Association (WDEA), notably those in the coal-producing counties, we wish to express our support for House Bill 1455 to provide a hearing and public comment process upon the planned closure of a coal-fired power plant, and to establish rules for the reclamation of the site where a plant is closed.

The need for a process to inform the public of the implications of a plant closure was demonstrated last year with the announcement that Great River Energy intended to shut down Coal Creek Station by the end of 2022. The announcement sent shock waves through central North Dakota. The 1,100-megawatt plant and the associated Falkirk Mine are the major employer in McLean County, providing roughly 700 jobs. But the potential blow to the region's economy is only half the story. Citizens have been left wondering what the effect of shutting down a huge baseload coal plant will have on the reliability of the electric grid.

HB 1455 will establish a process to address these public concerns by directing the Public Service Commission (PSC) to gather information about the economic impact of the plant retirement on the affected cities, counties and the state, as well as its impact on electric rates, reliability, and potential options that would allow the plant to remain in operation. Shutting down a massive plant like Coal Creek, leaving the public figuratively (and perhaps literally) in the dark about the future consequences of the decision is unacceptable. The public deserves to have their questions answered, and deserves the opportunity to offer comments that could perhaps lead to alternative solutions to either preserve the plant's operation and ensure grid reliability, or lead to other options to ease the economic damage.

The legislation will also empower the PSC to adopt rules establishing site reclamation requirements and bonding to ensure sites are restored if and when a plant is closed.

WDEA wishes to thank Representative Nehring for introducing this important legislation, and urges the committee to support the passage of HB 1412.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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