

LD 19 Resolution: Energy Siting Process

LD 19 has adopted a resolution to be considered at the January central committee meeting. LD 19 has married Gray's Harbor's concern over a proposed wind energy project to ARC's review of renewable energy siting in the context of wind and solar developments in central Washington and Oregon.

WSDCCRES - ?? -??/??/?? – SUB – AGR – Energy Siting Process

Whereas, we have a climate emergency and the development of additional renewable energy is critical for its mitigation.

Whereas, fishing and crabbing off the Pacific Coast of Washington have become the economic backbone for Pacific and Gray's Harbor Counties since the 1880's.

Whereas, climate change and resulting sea level rise is expected to have significant impact on these industries, both of which are suffering economically from ocean warming.

Whereas, a wind energy project, Grays Harbor Wind, is being proposed off the coast of Gray's Harbor and Pacific Counties that is likely to impact fish and fishing grounds and which could cause irreparable harm to fishing and crabbing industries.

Whereas, Washington coastal governments desire to have sufficient regulatory control over state and federal ocean projects that will impact their communities.

Whereas, WSDCC passage of Resolution 2018SCRES – 183 – 180616 calls for “administrative rules...that enable a just transition for...communities directly affected by the transition to a renewable energy economy...”

Whereas, HB 1332 became law in 2020 (RCW 80.50.010) with the intent of streamlining Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) operations, including substituting a representative of the Washington Association of Counties as a standing member to replace the episodic county commissioner affected by the proceeding, in direct conflict with 2018SCRES – 183 – 180616.

Whereas, the tension between local and central over siting of wind and solar is understandable. The intent of EFSEC in RCW 80.50.010 is “to ensure...that the location and operation of such facilities will produce minimal adverse effects on the environment, ecology of the land and its wildlife, and the ecology of state waters and their aquatic life.” This sounds good enough but in practice it is clear that EFSEC is to protect the “broad interests of the public” over the particular interest of the counties.

Whereas, the RCW's reference to “minimal adverse effects” is laudable. Wind and solar are not neutral amendments to local ecologies and do compete with existing land and water uses, and yet we are committed to replacing fossil fuels with wind, solar, geothermal, and whatever else it takes.

Therefore be it resolved, that the Washington State Democratic Central Committee firmly encourage elected federal and state officials to support local governments when considering state and federal energy projects that could have negative impacts on local economies and communities.

Therefore be it further resolved, that the WSDCC encourage local community government and other stakeholder involvement in the regulatory control decision making process for the Grays Harbor Wind Project.

Therefore be it further resolved, that the WSDCC encourage state lawmakers to modify state law related to EFSEC to obtain a better balance between the interests of local and central authority.

Therefore be it finally resolved, that WSDCC forwards this Resolution to our Washington State Legislative Delegation, to Governor Jay Inslee, and to our Federal Congressional Delegation.

Submitted by 19th Legislative District Democrats to the Washington State Democratic Central Committee for consideration at its January 2022 meeting. (Date Submitted 11/22/2021)