



RE: Request for veto of Jobs Growth and Energy Affordability Bill (SF1456)

May 26, 2017

Dear Governor Dayton,

We, the undersigned organizations and the thousands of Minnesotans we represent, ask you to veto SF 1456, the Jobs Growth and Energy Affordability Bill.

We greatly appreciate all you have done to improve this bill over its predecessor, SF 1937. Many onerous provisions were removed and we are enormously grateful for this.

On many fronts, this session was unlike any in recent memory. The global budget agreement, which was reached late Monday night, was broken. The legislature passed budget bills that the public could not track, falling far short of Minnesotans' documented expectations and in some cases causing long term harm to our state. With regard to the environment, this Jobs & Energy bill neither "grows jobs" nor makes "energy affordable." Indeed it moves Minnesota backward on both of those points, while establishing statewide policy that prevents us from making progress on issues of great importance.

The following are serious concerns remaining with SF 1456:

Prohibiting local governments from banning plastic bags.

Plastic bags haven't always been part of American life. But the single plastic bag used for an average of just 12 minutes will continue to harm the water, people and wildlife of this planet long after our grandchildren's grandchildren have come and gone. Citizens have worked to convince some local governments that there is a better way for our future. Overturning this progress would be another unjustified preemption of local government control.

Eliminates Public Utilities Commission (PUC) safeguards from price gauging by utilities serving rural residents who want to use solar or wind power.

Right now, customers are challenging fees as much as \$83 a month to connect their renewable energy sources to the utilities. This bill will remove their ability to have those fees reviewed by independent experts at the Commission. You have already vetoed this provision twice.

Enables Xcel to use \$54 million in Renewable Development Fund money to buyout biomass and poultry power supply contracts.

Years ago, Xcel agreed to a 20-year biomass mandate in exchange for being able to store nuclear waste at Prairie Island. If Xcel wishes to buyout the biomass contract, it should use other funds – not funds designated for energy innovation.

Weakens 1.5% Solar Energy Standard for medium sized utilities.

This change discourages investment in smaller projects by raising the cap on the size of solar projects that would count toward the standard. The current size is 20 kilowatts, and the new standard would be double that. It also allows Minnesota Power and Ottertail Power to meet the standard by counting only utility-owned “community” solar gardens, overturning a clear decision by the PUC.

Exempts small utilities from participating in energy savings and efficiency programs.

This provision denies rural customers and other ratepayers receiving energy from small utilities the ability to participate in programs including the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP), on-bill repayment for efficiency investments, and low income programs.

Eliminates the popular Roof-top/ Made in Minnesota Solar rebate program.

This program has created more than 495 jobs since its inception in 2013. The number of Minnesota-made manufacturers has increased from two in 2013 to five in 2017, and provided support for the growth of an estimated 500 supply-chain companies across the state.

Repeals Minnesota’s goal, framework, and planning strategy for a 100% renewable energy future.

This bill significantly undercuts Minnesota’s leadership in addressing climate change and moving to a sustainable energy economy. Current law requires the state to develop a framework to make Minnesota the first state in the nation to end the use of fossil fuels and use only renewable energy.

With the urgency of addressing the climate crisis, repealing this goal and planning process is a huge step backwards and extremely shortsighted. This goal is not only necessary, it is achievable if we keep moving in the right direction.

While the repealer may be largely symbolic at this time, it epitomizes the direction of energy policy in this budget bill.

Governor Dayton, at a time when we should be accelerating our efforts to increase renewable energy use and adopt sustainable practices, this bill moves us backward. It is not deserving of your signature.

Please veto SF 1456.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Alliance for Sustainability

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Center for Biological Diversity

Clean Water Action

CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)

Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Friends of the Cloquet Valley State Forest

Friends of the Mississippi River

Institute for Local Self Reliance

Izaak Walton League – Minnesota Division

Land Stewardship Project

League of Women Voters Minnesota

Lower Phalen Creek Project

Minnesota Conservation Federation

Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light

Minnesota Native Plant Society

Minnesota Ornithologists Union

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

MN350

Pesticide Action Network

Pollinate Minnesota

Renewing the Countryside

Save Our Sky Blue Waters

TakeAction – Minnesota *

Transit for Livable Communities

* denotes not an MEP member