

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak.

My name is Jeff Strouse; I have three children; and I live not far from a piece of land that is part of a proposed fuel cell energy plan.

I'm writing this because this is something bigger than just me. More important than just the bottom line.

I'm writing this to ensure that the intelligent people who make decisions around energy and zoning are fully equipped to hear all voices; to respect all views; and to reflect on all versions of the facts when weighing the costs and benefits of matters that affect the lives of real people. It's a serious matter, to say the least.

Now I know there are some who will speak of the benefits of certain technologies and therefore argue that the Siting Council should have limited discretion. They will tell you that everything they do is safe. They will tell you that everything they do is progressive and good and for the betterment of mankind. They will tell you that ordinary people like me never understand the facts or the figures or the finances; that we respond with emotional knee jerk reactions rather than educated, thoughtful responses. They will insist that nothing they do can negatively impact our lives or our community.

But I encourage you to watch them closely. Just watch them roll their eyes when Joe the Plumber sits before you; or when Jane the Teacher expresses her views; or when average citizens tell you over and over why they are concerned about certain technologies living right next to them. Watch them sigh with scorn when we come to you today and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow to protect our families and our homes...our culture and our community...our schools and places of worship... and our parks and farms and gardens... pictures of safe, small towns that we've all worked hard to paint... and those which we'll seek to protect until the bitter end.

If these technology and energy companies are so concerned about what's right and progressive....and if they really care about making the world a better place, then:

Let them tell us, in detail, why the CT Siting Council should not have more authority to listen to the very people who these companies purport to serve.

Let them tell us why the CT Siting Council should not have greater ability to weigh potential health and safety risks.

Let them tell us why the CT Siting Council should not give greater weight to scenic and historic considerations.

And let them tell us why the CT Siting Council should not operate under a more robust set of standards in making determinations that affect the lives of every resident in this great state.

To the technology and energy companies that seek to restrict the CT Siting Council's authority, I say, with all due respect, bring on your lawyers and your lobbyists and your cash.

But take note...because we have something that is smarter than your smartest lawyer; something that talks more clearly than your most savvy lobbyist...and something that money cannot buy.

You see... we have a little something called COMMON SENSE.

And I'm respectfully calling on our elected officials to exercise the very common sense that brought them to this point. People all over this state are watching and waiting, wondering whether their back yard is safe from the next financial statement that a company seeks to improve.

I have all the confidence in the world that this great body will send them the right message...and tell them that the people who decide where energy plants or cell towers go won't be bound by factors that invariably favor the companies that seek to build those plants or towers. That all voices will be heard. And that democracy will be served.

And I thank the countless number of families, friends and neighbors who, every day, join us in making sure that our voices are heard. I know it's been difficult...taking days off from work, walking door to door, spending less time with our children...just so we can protect them... To my dear friends... I leave you with a quote from Thomas Paine, who, in 1776, said this:

He said: Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.

Thank you.