

WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
Commissioner Lorinda Wichman
Vice Chairman-Nye County Commission, Nevada

Testimony in support of S.279 the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act of 2013 and S.2440, the BLM Permit Processing Improvement Act of 2014.

Before the
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Washington, D.C.
July 29, 2014

Good afternoon, I would like to thank Chairman Landrieu and the Committee for this incredible opportunity to share a little with you from the outback of Nevada. I would also like to thank Senator Heller and his staff for making this opportunity possible.

I am Lorinda Wichman, Commissioner of District 1 in Nye County, Nevada and Vice-Chair of the Board. I am also the Chairman of the Nye, White Pine, Eureka and Lander Counties SRS RAC. The President Elect of the Nevada State Association, Chairman of the Association's committee on Public Lands and Natural Resources. I am also a Governor's appointee to the State Land Use Planning Advisory Council and Nevada's representative on the Public Lands Steering Committee of the National Association of Counties.

S.279 and S.2440 provide for a more equitable and efficient path to the development of our nation's diversified energy portfolio. I was once told that the measure of good legislation was when everyone was angered but this legislation has an extremely diverse base of support. My testimony in support of this bill is on behalf of my neighbors, my Commission District, Nye County, the Nevada Association of Counties and the National Association of Counties.

District One of Nye County, which is possibly the largest County Commission District in the lower 48 states, is 17,933 sq. miles. The county itself is 18,210 square miles. Included within the boundaries of my commission district are the Nevada National Security Site, portions of Nellis Air Force Base that include the Nevada Test and Training Range, Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, portions of the Death Valley National Park, Yucca Mountain, the Yomba and Duckwater Indian Reservations, Round Mountain Gold mine, Railroad Valley oil field and the Crescent Dunes renewable energy project.

I am extremely proud to represent this district. My neighbors and Nye County are proud to host so many recognizable landmarks that provide for our nation's security. Ninety-eight percent of Nye County is owned, managed or controlled by the federal government. Ten communities and two reservations spread out over this 18,210 square mile area have forced us to maintain two separate centers of government more than 150 miles apart. For perspective; once a month I travel 86 miles, one way, to attend a commission meeting in the County seat and once a month I travel 252 miles, one way, to attend the second commission meeting held in the population center.

Our operating revenues have steadily declined since 2008 due mostly to the assessed values of property which is one third of the pre 2008 values. The County operating budget for fiscal year 2014/2015 is now only \$30 million. We have reduced our workforce by 15% and unfortunately a large part of the reduction was in law enforcement. We have consolidated services and restricted the purchase of non-essential supplies. Our infrastructure, buildings and grounds are suffering from lack of improvements. Payments in lieu of taxes provide us with \$2 to \$3.5 mil a year, or \$.33 per acre. Our private property taxes are collected on only 2% of Nye County because of the overwhelming federal presence. Despite these obstacles Nevada Counties are required to provide essential services to all of their residents and visitors. Therefore, it is easy to understand why Nye County and the state and national associations are encouraging the revenue sharing.

Nevada has an abundance of natural resources. The current management practices and permitting processes to reach our resources have discouraged many from pursuing projects on federally managed lands. The hardy industries that have persevered are building into their feasibility studies as much as eight years and hundreds of thousands of dollars just to get through those processes.

The Nevada Association of Counties policy on renewable energy development highlights the role of County Officials working with other agencies to permit appropriate projects on federally managed lands. The policy also promotes the use of cooperating agency agreements to assist in the development of resource management plans throughout the state. Without a direct benefit to the host counties there isn't much incentive to spend time and taxpayers' money to promote any policy.

Nevada has abundant wind, solar, geothermal, mineral and land resources which position us to be one of the top states in attracting development of alternative energy projects. Streamlining the process to realize the benefits of production is paramount to our future success and allows Counties to play a greater role in helping the state recover from its economic crisis.

Passage of this legislation will lay the foundation to help industry to generate the funds needed by Counties to provide critical services to my neighbors, Nye County, the State of Nevada and our Nation.

Respectfully submitted
July 27, 2014

Lorinda A Wichman
Nye County Commissioner
Pres. Elect of Nevada's Association of Counties