

# OPINION: The constraints of 'not in my backyard'

By [Peggy and Brad Greenway](#) on May 2, 2016 at 5:23 p.m.

"Not in my backyard" is a constraining economic policy. Unfortunately, this has become an all-too-common problem in many areas of our state. We, as citizens of rural South Dakota, should consider unintended consequences carefully before trying to stop a project that brings much-needed tax revenue, fosters the return of future generations to family farms and benefits local businesses and manufacturers.

If a proposed project — such as a wind farm, hog farm, cattle feedlot or any other rural business — has met all of the local zoning rules, that project should be considered without undue influence of emotional testimony.

We are paying our county commissioners to review credible information regarding projects and base their decisions on facts.

Our family was recently in the news for accepting an offer to lease land for a small wind project. Despite meeting zoning requirements, it was denied by the Davison County Commissioners on March 3. It was a lost opportunity for residents of Davison County, as it would have provided \$30,000 to Mount Vernon School, \$3,000 to Mitchell School District, \$10,000 to Beulah Township and \$23,000 to Davison County annually for 20 or more years. And yes, just like any other business venture, members of our family would have benefited financially as compensation for land used for roads to the towers and for the tower bases.

Wind energy is a form of value-added agriculture that has been successful for years in many states, including our more densely populated neighbors, Iowa and Minnesota. The tax base (land) in Davison County is a finite resource. The only way to increase income to schools, townships and the county, other than raising property taxes, is through business development outside city limits.

Unfortunately, instead of following the zoning board's unanimous recommendation, four out of five county commissioners based their decision on negative rhetoric from a few people. By denying the conditional use permit without any legitimate reason except visual, the commissioners have set a dangerous precedent by discouraging any other kind of economic development project from considering our county.

The way this situation was handled by four of five county commissioners was frustrating, and puts a black eye on Davison County. We feel terrible for the 15 Mitchell Technical Institute wind energy students sitting at one meeting listening to misinformation about their future field of work.

One of Mitchell's largest employers, Trail King, also has a link to the wind industry, as they manufacture specialty trailers for wind turbines and blades. There are numerous local companies, such as concrete providers, electricians, dirt movers, restaurants and fuel companies, that would have benefited from this \$40 million construction project.

Davison County lost out on this opportunity, and possibly future projects as well. I sincerely hope South Dakota's leaders and citizens will base future decisions about business development in rural areas on reputable information and benefit to local economies, rather than emotions. Please think carefully before saying, "Not in my backyard."