

# LETTER: The truth about wind turbine tax benefit to schools

By [Ken Stach](#) on May 7, 2016 at 10:53 a.m.



To the Editor:

The Davison County Commissioners were astute in their recent decision to reject the proposed wind turbine farm. However, the developer has simply moved north and is now proposing a nine-turbine project in southern Sanborn County.

ADVERTISING

One of the key selling points proponents are using to tout this project is the "greater than \$1 million benefit to the schools over the 30-year life of the project." Let's set the record straight.

Senate Bill 131 (Section 6B) defines how wind energy tax revenue is allocated to the owning school district (Sanborn Central School). For any wind turbine project producing energy for the

first time after June 30, the owning school district would retain 100 percent of the revenue for years 1-5, declining by 20 percent per year thereafter, to 0 percent in year 10 and beyond.

The only way for a school district to retain the revenue for the full life of the project is to "opt out" of the new funding formula. The 0.5 percent increase in state sales tax to fund higher teacher salaries equates to \$72,000 per year increased teachers' salaries at Sanborn Central.

If they choose to opt out of the new funding formula, they would still have to pay the teachers at the increased rate, but wouldn't receive the increased funding. Thus, the \$30,000 per year benefit from wind turbine tax revenue is overshadowed by the \$72,000 per year additional funding via the new formula. Reps. Wollman and Heinemann, and Sen. Parsley, have all confirmed this understanding.

Thus, the 30-year average tax revenue benefit to the Sanborn Central School District would be a meager \$7,600 per year. They currently receive \$4,877 per student from the state, meaning that tax revenue equates to a mere 1.6 students over the life of the project. If we have one young family move from Sanborn County, not wanting to live in the shadows of these behemoths, it would more than wipe out the supposed tax benefit.

We can only hope and pray that the Sanborn County Commissioners make as wise a decision as their brethren in Davison County did a few months ago.

Ken Stach

Letcher