

April 21, 2015

To: Representative Diane Mitsch Bush, Diane Mitsch Bush <repdianehd26@gmail.com>

From: Ed Marston

About: HB 15-364

(Please read this testimony for me at the appropriate hearing)

I write as a private citizen. Although I am president of the board of Solar Energy International, a not-for-profit organization that has taught 35,000 people around the world how to design and install alternative energy facilities, and although I have served as an elected director of Delta-Montrose Electric Association for 18 years, with my service ending in 2013, I do not claim to officially represent SEI or DMEA. And although I have a Ph.d in experimental condensed matter physics, I am not testifying as an expert in this matter. And although I am a current elected director of Delta County Economic Development, Inc., I am representing that organization. I state these affiliations to indicate that I have devoted the last 40 years of my life to this rural community.

I am pleased to line up with DMEA, Tri-State Electric and Generation Association, XCEL, DORA, CREA and the other organizations backing HB 15-364. I also note that the 2014 state legislature passed HB 14-1030, which was intended to clear the way for the installation and use of microhydro facilities.

Microhydro installations are potentially very important to rural western Colorado because they can provide inexpensive on-site electricity to rural irrigators. They also have the potential to turn the expense of buying electric power into a profitable activity, both for the irrigators and for the ditch companies on which they depend.

Rural western Colorado is the poor cousin to the urbanized Front Range. Microhydro is a way to decrease the income gap between the two parts of the state. So there is a larger state interest in making microhydro as feasible as possible.

I have read HB 14-1030 and was pleased at how clear and straightforward it was. Plainly, the State Legislature with Governor Hickenlooper's concurrence intended to make the installation of microhydro as simple as possible. The drafters and supporters of the bill had been thoroughly briefed on why UL certification for small hydro was not feasible NOR necessary. They passed this bill based on the best technical advice available.

Tragically, in the aftermath of the bill's passage, the State Electrical Board set itself above the Legislature and the Governor and chose to ignore the bill and appoint itself as Colorado's energy czar. I do not know what motivated this group to thwart the will of Colorado's elected officials. But the State Electrical Board has chosen to become an enemy of rural western Colorado.

So, I first ask the Colorado Legislature to pass HB15-364. Given the wide and deep support this bill has from experts and from various interests, such as CREA and Tri-State and XCEL, there is no danger to electrical workers, as claimed in Mary Broderick's testimony on behalf of the IBEW. The entities who support the bill would not endanger those who will work on or around these systems.

Second, I ask the Legislature to save itself a lot of future trouble by reforming the self-perpetuating State Electric Board by making it directly accountable to the state's elected officials. At the least, its members should be appointed by the Governor.

Sincerely,

Ed Marston

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