

**COMMENTS OF
REPRESENTATIVE H. WILLIAM DeWEESE
MAJORITY LEADER
PA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ON THE
U. S. Department of Energy's
Office of Electric Delivery & Energy Reliability
Draft National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor
Designations**

Docket No. 2007-OE-01, Draft Mid-Atlantic Area National Corridor

**June 13, 2007
Pittsburgh, PA**

My name is Bill DeWeese. I am the Majority Leader of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. I respectfully proffer these comments in my capacity as both the Majority Leader and as the duly elected State Legislator for the 50th Legislative District, which encompasses all of Greene County and parts of Washington and Fayette Counties in Southwestern PA. Accordingly, as the State Legislator for the 50th Legislative District and as a life-long citizen of Greene County, Pennsylvania, I have a very strong interest in this proceeding.

It is important for you to know that I have long and actively opposed § 1221 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, and, thereby, oppose the draft designation of the Mid-Atlantic Area National Corridor as a National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor or NIETC. I believe that § 1221 advances a purported national energy policy which is void of public benefit for the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and nationwide; ignores environmentally clean, renewable, efficient and cost effective energy alternatives; and commandeers the rights of states and their political subdivisions to adopt, administer, and manage land use policies; if such state or local polices would conflict with the ambitions of profit-seeking corporations desiring to stretch high voltage transmission lines from my home in Greene County across parts of West Virginia and the Commonwealth of Virginia to the energy challenged urban centers of the Mid-Atlantic.

The draft Mid-Atlantic Area National Corridor covers geographic areas in eight states, including the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If this draft National Corridor is implemented, 50 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, the majority of the land mass in the Commonwealth, would be situated in a National Corridor.

Consequently, the states, including Pennsylvania, situated in the Mid-Atlantic Area National Corridor, either in whole or in part, would become the energy hub for the urban centers of the Mid-Atlantic Region. If the Mid-Atlantic Area National Corridor is approved by the DOE, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, not unlike the other affected states, would have no control, no say, and no recourse, other than expensive litigation, over transmission planning, location and construction within its geographic borders.

Moreover, the designation of a NIETC in this Commonwealth and the accompanying Congressionally conveyed *backstop* authority granted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission would diminish or even eliminate the roles of several state administrative agencies. These agencies were expressly established in statute to protect Pennsylvania's natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources and, in some cases, to review and comment on transmission line siting applications. These agencies include the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, the Office of Consumer Advocate, the Office of Small Business Advocate, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Department of Transportation, the Game Commission, and the Historical and Museum Commission. Although I cannot speak to whether the DOE consulted with any or all of these agencies in its initial proceedings, I can assert that if the DOE designates a NIETC in this Commonwealth with little or no consultation with all the administrative agencies charged with representing the rights and interest of electric ratepayers, protecting natural resources, and assuring that a broad public benefit will result from such designation, it would be difficult if

not impossible to conclude that the designation of a NIETC would be in the public interest.

There is no doubt that the designation of a NIETC of the magnitude proposed in the draft Mid-Atlantic Area National Corridor would have significant negative outcomes for the Commonwealth, its people and political subdivisions. Not only would electric ratepayers living within a NIETC face the possibility of higher electric rates if a transmission facility would be approved for location and construction, they would also endure the fear of losing their American Dream; the homes and property that some struggled and sacrificed to buy. The following is a mere snapshot of Pennsylvania's economic, cultural, historical, natural, and scenic resources whose profitability and sustainability would be jeopardized by a National Corridor designation:

(1) As of April 13, 2006, 323,366 acres of farmland had been preserved in 53 counties under the Commonwealth's agricultural land preservation programs.

(2) Pennsylvania has 120 state parks on 283,000 acres, 20 state forests on 2.1 million acres of forestland in 48 of 67 counties, and 300 state game lands on 1.4 million acres. Pennsylvania's state forestland is one of the largest expanses of public forestland in the eastern United States.

(3) Allegheny National Forest (500,000 acres), Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area (70,000 acres), Gettysburg National Military Park (6,000 acres), Valley Forge National Park (4,000 acres) and Fort Necessity National Battlefield (900 acres).

(4) Forty-two places in Pennsylvania are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

(5) More than 440,000 acres of land in Pennsylvania has been conserved by the states' land trusts organizations.

(6) There are 158 National Historic Landmarks in Pennsylvania.

I reiterate that the approval of the Mid-Atlantic Area National Corridor as a NIETC would have a devastating impact not only on my constituents in Southwestern Pennsylvania but also on people in most regions of this Commonwealth who may soon discover that their homes, children's schools, businesses, workplaces, and favorite tourist destinations could be situated in or near a proposed NIETC. The likelihood of this inevitability juxtaposed with the possibility that my constituents and other Pennsylvanians may face increased electric rates but receive no economic or quality-of-life benefit from interstate transmission line projects makes the rationale for implementing a profit driven public policy in the name of national interest or national security difficult to understand.

I submit that the lives of my constituents and the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania should not be disrupted because of an energy policy that ignores their quality of life for the benefit of profit driven corporations. With that I will continue to oppose efforts to designate national interest electric transmission corridors and any transmission projects seeking to locate and construct a high voltage transmission lines in a National Corridor situated geographically in this Commonwealth.

I thank you for your consideration of my comments and your willingness to consider the consequences that any NIETC would have on the lives of people in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and nationwide, and on our natural resources.