

Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology
Public Hearing March 11, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Distinguished Members of the EUT Committee:

Good afternoon. Our names are Eric and Becky Rolfson. We farm in Albion and are testifying today in opposition to LD 596.

We support and use renewable energy; understand the need for expanding Maine's power grid; recognize the existential threat from climate change; and support the state's renewable energy goals. Yet, we are dismayed that the Legislature is considering approving the Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure without knowing critical information in advance -- such as its:

- Cost
- Route
- Scope
- Generation source
- or Contractor

We were among the ~~3~~3,500 families that received letters in July 2023 indicating that LS Power would be bisecting our MOFGA-certified maple syrup operation; that discussions concerning the project had quietly been in the works for more than two years; and that the line already had been approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor—without knowing its proposed route.

What ensued was the most stressful 18 months of our lives, characterized by tears, anger, frustration, and ultimately, organized opposition. We had spent half a century building an organic, sustainable, rural lifestyle that was about to be upended without our input or just compensation.

That process was neither the definition of transparency in government, nor a smart move for those of us who recognize the need for renewable energy.

If these projects exclude stakeholders on the front end, and legislative approvals are given before key information is available—this and future transmission projects are destined to fail -- as did the Northern Pass project in NH after ten years of community resistance. ¹

It is critical that Maine does this “right” the first time and, in our opinion, doing new transmission lines “right” would include:

- Running HVDC rather than HVAC lines for transmission efficiencies;
- Putting them underground for enhanced security and to minimize storm damage; and
- Using existing corridors, whenever possible, to maintain Maine’s rural character and protect landowner rights.

But even if each of these best practices cannot be implemented for every project, is it not this Committee’s responsibility, in partnership with the PUC, OPA, the Governor’s office and others to make informed EUT decisions for Maine and its constituents? And to accomplish that, do you not need as much information as possible related to those decisions?

Passing the blanket approval inherent in LD 596 (and LD 810) would not only be unfair and counter-productive to impacted landowners, businesses, and rural residents, it also would mean ceding basic legislative authority to those who stand to profit from transmission line construction.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ <https://www.clf.org/blog/northern-pass-not-relevant/>