

Opposed to LD 2174

My name is Holly Noyes, and I'm from Albion, Maine. My family owns a dairy farm that has been shipping milk every single day since the mid-1950s to Portland, where it is consumed locally here in Maine. We milk about 100 cows and raise another 100 heifers and young stock.

My grandfather and father worked unbelievably hard to turn what was once a dilapidated homestead in the 1920s with no water or electricity into the farm it is today. That is more than 70 years of milk, every single day. Now my husband and I are transitioning into running the farm. I have enormous shoes to fill.

There are many issues with LD 2174, but for time purposes I'll focus on one: this legislation is the wrong solution, and transmission line projects should be removed from this bill.

In 2023, LS Power contacted us about a proposed new transmission corridor which would be located near an existing powerline corridor line in our town. We were terrified. Albion has 10 active dairy farms today; at one point, there were 28. Every field is in use still. There is no idle land waiting for infrastructure. Albion is also home to many other agricultural and forestry businesses; it is part of Maine's working food system.

Transmission lines are fundamentally different from solar, wind, or battery projects. Those are voluntary agreements between landowners and developers. Transmission lines are not voluntary. They carry the threat of eminent domain.

These projects can span hundreds of miles and cross hundreds of properties. Restricting permitting timelines, the way this bill proposes risks putting undue pressure on landowners to accept a developer's proposal or face eminent domain. A parcel of land may look simple on a computer screen in an engineering firm far away from Maine, but standing in that field seeing the drainage patterns, the soil conditions, the equipment access, the crop rotations tell a very different story. Farmland is easy to permit and doesn't incur a lot of unknown or added costs for construction fees and there are no substantial mitigation fees for impacting it. This makes farmland a highly sought after parcel for development.

It has never been clear why existing corridors could not be upgraded, or why roadways and other already disturbed infrastructure were not prioritized. Using existing corridors would reduce impacts, contain costs, and protect working farmland without forcing hundreds of landowners into unnecessary conflict.

My grandfather once told my father, when asked why he bought another piece of land instead of retiring, "I'd rather look at the land than look at the money."

That is how most farmers think. We measure wealth in soil, in open fields, and in the ability to grow food and pass something on intact, not in selling it for short-term development and profit.

Transmission does not belong in this bill. It is the wrong tool to solve the problem, and it puts working farms like ours at risk.