

T o w n o f C a r a t u n k

Office of Selectmen

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LD 1587 - An Act To Remove the Municipal Ordinance Exemption for the Development of Nonessential Transmission Lines

Good morning, Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and distinguished members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology committee,

My name is Elizabeth Caruso, and I am the First Selectman of the Town of Caratunk. I am testifying in support of LD 1587; **Local control** is a key factor to **public safety**, the **local economy** and **overall public welfare**. Obviously, no one relates with and advocates for the local town better than its own boards and residents.

Without the passage of LD1587, the citizens' democratically enacted ordinances would be unethically nullified for a non-essential, for-profit development providing no benefit to the Maine ratepayer.

Unfortunately, the PUC opened the door for NECEC, the first commercial, merchant or ETU project, to be able to receive exemptions with its CPCN. **This was and is a dangerous precedence and treacherous to the state and its citizens.**

However, an ETU should be treated like any other development project because it's not a utility project necessary for reliability or to meet any other Maine need. What other business or homeowner has the power to seek an exemption from local permitting requirements? Wind and solar projects were NOT eligible for exemption, and there's not much difference between an ETU and any other energy project that competes for an RFP. NECEC shouldn't get any special treatment.

Considering how 25 towns have now voted to oppose the project, it is unethical to take away their permitting rights as well. As an example, Caratunk's year-round and seasonal residents had and still have grave concerns over the destruction that the NECEC industrial project will have on their natural resources and tourism economy (hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, rafting, hiking), environment, fisheries and wildlife, ways of life, view sheds and property values. After extending our moratorium 3 times (once due to Covid) while the planning board members and KVCOG worked diligently, our townspeople approved the Caratunk Energy Systems Ordinance which incorporates new solar and electrical transmission factors into the town's previous Wind Energy Facility Ordinance.

The goals of the ordinance were in part:

- **to protect the town from DC line fault fires** (for which there is NO fire/emergency protection in Caratunk or the 53 miles of new line),
- **to eliminate or reduce acoustic or flicker hazards** to a safe level
- to ensure industrial infrastructure **meets all setbacks** (or if not, it must be buried)
- to ensure that project-end **dismantling/decommissioning funds** are held in escrow (not saddled by future taxpayers).
- to ensure that **required expert analysis and legal support will be paid for by applicants** (as our small town does not have the budget or expertise to analyze, defend and sustain the expertise of growing technological advances.
- To ensure that future **development is consistent with Caratunk's 2020 Comprehensive Plan Vision.**

Vision: Caratunk offers a peaceful and safe, small town community where year-round and seasonal residents enjoy an unmatched quality of life. We value Caratunk's natural assets which attract our landowners and visitors: wildlife and fisheries habitats, forest resources, natural features, and the extraordinary quality of our numerous water resources. To sustain and protect our natural scenic beauty and recreational opportunities, we will manage future development in a responsible, sustainable way and ensure that current or future land use policies support this vision.

Why would the state hinder local citizens from these protections which they voted for? In Maine, local town government is truly democratic. Citizens enact these ordinances for good reasons. The Caratunk Planning Board members have repeatedly expressed their concern that their hard work would be futile if a PUC exemption eradicates the town ordinance and the will of the voters. For what? Not for Maine ratepayers' benefits, but for the profits of corporations and their shareholders.

The Legislature should clarify the statute to make sure that any ETU or merchant project is required to abide by the same standards we expect from any other company that does business in our communities. No one cares more and knows more about the safety and welfare of our citizens, lands and landowners than our local government. Thankfully, our municipal democratic processes ensure that we are governed locally by the people and for the people. Please Vote to support LD 1587.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Kind regards,

Elizabeth Caruso

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First Selectman/Chair

Board of Selectmen

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