

Intro:

My name is Aaron Ault. I was born and raised just outside of town here, north of Nyona Lake. I am a fourth generation Fulton County farmer, CTO and co-founder of an Indiana software company, senior researcher at Purdue University in electrical and computer engineering, and an international professional speaker on ag data privacy and technology. I went to Caston, then Purdue, and after graduate school I could have moved to Silicon Valley to work at Google with my friends but chose to move back to Fulton county to farm and raise my family. Everyone asked me why, and I told them the truth: because I love it here and I love to farm. My wife and I have 4 kids that, God willing, might choose to stay near home to raise their families and continue to farm here in Fulton county.

I am here tonight to speak on behalf of the Fulton county property Rights Group, a group of concerned citizens that have been tirelessly researching industrial wind turbines.

I would like to open by thanking the commissioners for allowing us to speak, and I want to acknowledge my respect for our Fulton County zoning agency. Just a few

short years ago when my Dad and I were forced by IDEM to expand our cattle operation, we could have been on the other side of this table. Horror stories abound around the country and even in our state for livestock farmers like me suddenly finding themselves the target of hostile forces. Most of us would just like to be able to run our farms without interference from government. Having gone through the permitting process myself, I was thoroughly proud of Fulton County and the Planning Commission for their reasonable common sense and willingness to work with agriculture.

I mention this because I want to be clear that I come to this discussion heavily biased toward government NOT telling residents what they can do with their own land. However, taken to the extreme, there would be no point for county commissioners at all. Clearly we can all agree that one of the core purposes of the commissioners is to side in favor of the county's residents when there is a significant risk to public safety, health, and welfare. The question before us tonight is therefore not *should* a line be drawn where safety, health, and welfare concerns should prevail, but *where* should that line be drawn.

To begin, picture with me a scenario where Donald Trump (who I voted for) hired these RES salespeople tomorrow. Their new job is to use their relationships with you to convince you to approve his application to build 300 separate 600-foot tall Trump Tower skyscrapers with jumbotron video boards on top. These video boards will play videos of industrial wind turbines running all day, complete with synchronized red blinking lights all night long, and loud speakers to mimick the sound of turbines. Would the same rules apply to these Trump Towers that you are applying to RES's wind turbines?

The primary reason Mr. Trump wants to build these is to write off much of his income, and hopes to sell them to foreign companies shortly after construction. As a bonus though, he intends to pay everyone involved 10% more money than RES is offering.

Would you consider it the job of the commissioners to seriously consider transforming an agricultural county where the residents expect to be surrounded by crops, livestock, and fall foliage into an industrial city with 300 skyscrapers, each taller than every single building in

Indianapolis except the tallest, Salesforce tower? Do you think the residents of Fulton County are mostly ok with transplanting a city larger than downtown Indianapolis on top of where they live? Would it be enough for Mr. Trump to entice you with promises of tax revenues and kickbacks for select county residents? And, don't forget, he told you this will not affect property values. Trust him. Obviously no one looking at buying a house would consider proximity to a *600-foot buzzing blinking rotating skyscraper* when deciding their offer.

Just to be thorough, the contracts have gag orders for anyone who signs them which prevent them from saying anything negative under threat of being sued. Mr. Trump also has "good neighbor" contracts, just like RES does, where he pays your neighbors to say good things about him. I was once told that the reason God commanded us to love him is that sometimes in life it is very hard to do so: if it were easy he wouldn't have had to command it. You do not have to command someone under threat of litigation to speak highly of you if everything is all candy canes and lollipops. There is one and only one reason that anyone includes gag orders and

hires paid secret activists: the deal isn't how it is portrayed on the surface.

Now consider if the billboards themselves actually rotate at 200 miles per hour on top of these skyscrapers. This is essentially the question before you tonight. You as county commissioners have been tasked with deciding how far from our homes and property lines these rotating skyscrapers can be planted. This decision will **CHANGE THE LIVES OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM *with the exception of the RES representatives.*** It will change them for the rest of our lives, our children's lives, and their children's lives. When the tax credits disappear and the towers become worthless, do you really believe that millions of dollars to tear down 300 separate 600-foot structures will suddenly appear even if all the t's are crossed and the i's are dotted? How can we possibly know today how much money it will take to tear these things down ten years from now?

In this case, the options are simple: either the county stays an agricultural county, or we'll make an instant change to an industrial wind county. The first, if it turns out to be a mistake, is fixable and temporary. If building

the turbines turns out to be the mistake that it has become for so many other counties in the US and abroad, then it is a *permanent* mistake. There is no going back. Enabling permanent mistakes is bad policy, whether in business or in government.

Please understand that this one decision will have more lasting effects on more people than any other decision you will ever make. If you make the wrong decision, you will have to live with everyone knowing you are primarily to blame. Your main job was supposed to be stopping precisely this sort of harmful mistake from happening, no matter how much money was offered to you, your family, or the county. You know of Jane Harper, former Tipton county commissioner, who is living this regret as a reality. Tipton has canceled the follow-on phases of their wind project, discovering that the permanent option was indeed the mistaken one.

Given that introduction, there are 3 main problems that we, the residents of Fulton County are concerned with:

Our **Safety**, our **Health & well-being**, and **Financial Welfare**.

## Safety

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Let's start with our Safety.

RES is proposing to place 600 foot turbines (some of the tallest in the country,) only 1,200 feet from homes, and only 900 feet from a non-participant's property line. *I am told these would be some of the smallest setbacks in all of Indiana.* How far can flying debris travel in the event of malfunction if launched at 200 mph from a height of 600 feet?

Please consider just a few brief facts: VESTAS, a Dutch manufacturer of turbines that are among those sold by RES, states in their operational safety manual that their own *workers should not linger within 1,640 feet of the turbines.* Yet RES would like to place turbines only 1,200 feet from our HOMES. And don't "linger" in your tractor farming under them...

Also turbulence from the wind turbines will prevent the Emergency helicopter service from reaching many areas of the county where it has already been needed,

including near Caston where towers are currently proposed.

Just 4 months ago this windmill caught fire in Iowa. What if this were around dry July wheat or Fall corn? Our fire departments cannot fight a fire at the top of an Indianapolis skyscraper with their extra \$25 property taxes. Probably only happened just this one time though...

This chart shows some records of wind turbine incidents from 1980 to 2017. Notice that number of incidents: 2,149, or *58 per year for 37 years*. I do not have time to show them all to you today, but suffice to say if you scan the list you will see plenty of "Fatal", "Fire", and other problems.

## **Health and Well-Being**

Let's look at another area of concern, our HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.

The 1,200 foot setback proposed by RES is not based on any health & safety data whatsoever. They aren't optimizing for safety, they are interested in density: they need lots of closely-spaced wind turbines. Why?

Simply because where we live is not a windy place. Just look at the map. So why are they here? Because other counties all over the country have kicked them out, the wind developers decided Fulton County looked like easy pickings.

We have presented you with *mountains* of data showing health risks caused by turbines.

The government in Denmark examined extensive data and currently requires setbacks of a half mile (2,460 feet). We are asking that you at listen to this data and adopt a setback of 2,460 feet (a half a mile) from our property lines. Germany, one of the most supportive countries in the world for subsidizing wind installations, uses 3280 feet (1000 m).

You, the commissioners have demanded that in order to change the current setback of 900 feet from a property line, we must provide you with a large body of peer-reviewed studies. Where are the studies that show a 900 foot setback from a property line is guaranteed sufficient? This blatant double standard explicitly puts the residents of your own county at a disadvantage: RES provides nothing to support their setbacks, yet you ask

your citizens to supply evidence? *They* are the applicants, not *us*!

In Delaware County, a wind developer proposed 1,500 foot setbacks. When challenged for any evidence, they arbitrarily tried to increase it to 1,750 feet. Why not 2250, or 2640, or a mile setback? Where is the data? This is a *permanent* decision! County after county are vastly increasing their setbacks to protect their citizens as more and more evidence makes it to light around the stifling gag orders in the contracts. You do not have to make this decision in a vacuum as the first county ever to consider this. There is plenty of data from those who came before you.

This also applies to the very real issues of noise, shadow flicker, and flashing red lights all night long. These have been found by the residents who live around them and in scientific studies all over the world to cause severe dizziness, vertigo, nausea, lack of sleep, depression, headaches and migraines, the list goes on and on. I want you to pay attention to that list, because you or someone you know in the county will experience some of these

and you cannot say you did not know about this ahead of time.

RES, and every other wind factory company, has the same response to the weight of this evidence of health problems: turbines are no louder than a refrigerator and everybody who complains is just a bunch of whiners. Of course, no one carries a continuously running refrigerator on their backs while attempting to speak or sleep. These health effects are real and detrimental to the health and safety of citizens. In fact just one of those issues, lack of sleep has only recently been proven a primary risk factor for pretty much every major disease: cancer, Alzheimers, heart disease, mental disorders like schizophrenia, and the list goes on. The scientific community uses low frequency sound like that from wind turbines to both control and disrupt sleep in their study participants. It sounds extreme, but many residents have even gone so far as to move their families into the basements or to build bunkers for their families to sleep in, living like moles in their own homes. And guess who wind companies take commissioners to visit when they ask for a grand tour? You guessed it: not the people holed up in their basement but the "good neighbors" and

land owners under gag orders to not say anything negative. Seems legit.

And don't forget the gag orders explicitly preventing complaints about noise or flicker: why call those out in particular if they are not a problem? Is that a legitimate question to ask of RES?

Please understand that it is not a question of whether the proposed installation in Fulton County will cause these health issues. These installations always cause these health issues. It's really just a question of which particular people will be affected.

## **Welfare**

Finally, the third area we'd like to focus on is our county's overall welfare.

Strangely, it is my understanding that the standard wind company response to property devaluation is that there is "no data" to support the idea that property values will decline when 600-foot rotating skyscrapers go up 1200 feet from your home. Yes, they really say that. One data point I have to offer is common sense from the farm:

Nobody will want your house. The other is Google: really, you can find lots of very real scientific studies just by typing a few letters into a search box. It's not that hard. Here's just one from the London School of Economics: "the value of homes close to wind farms slashed by 11%" Does the school have room for that budget cut?

And since I do not want to follow their tactics of willfully ignoring the arguments of the other side, I want to point out that there is one study of which I'm aware from Berkeley that, against common sense and all the other studies done around the world, found no reduction in property values. Of course only 2% of the homes in that study were within even a mile of a wind turbine, so it's hard to see how that applies here unless you'd like to consider 1-mile setbacks instead of our measely ½-mile setbacks.

We understand that you commissioners are looking at the potential money to be made from this corporate endeavor and this is a legitimate consideration. Tipton county thought that, too. But they found that the financial benefits only gave their citizens about a \$25 per

year cut on their taxes. Randolph or Benton county were promised the same economic development benefits you were: it is now documented that they experienced large population losses instead: people just moved away.

RES will also tell you that their project will bring jobs to our county. In Tipton, few were qualified for the permanent jobs and the “local” jobs were given to union workers 50 miles away.

Finally, as a farmer, I am concerned that my neighbor's wind turbine only 900 feet from my fencerow will in many cases prevent aerial applicators from flying large areas of my fields, with the remaining areas substantially more expensive to fly due to all the extra passes around the turbulence.

Even ground application of volatile common herbicides like 2,4-D will be affected by these wind patterns. I plant 1500 acres of annual ryegrass cover crops every year to prevent erosion and runoff that must be flown on the field with an airplane. Many farmers in the county use aerial applicators to spray fungicide late in the season. I have asked my aerial applicator companies and they have confirmed that they cannot fly close to turbines and

will charge more when turbines are in the area. The Soil and Water office at least should be adamantly opposed to this effort which will dramatically reduce these beneficial cover crops in the county. If my neighbor is asking to put skyscrapers around my fields that prevent me from farming them properly, then it is no longer about only his property rights: it is about how his decisions affect farmer's property too.

In addition, as many of you know, Fulton County fields need underground drainage in order to produce a crop. Who do I call at the multinational corporation when they mess up my drainage systems that flow into neighboring fields? How will new drainage systems be run in the future when the entire county is cross-crossed by continuous underground power lines?

## **Conclusion**

In closing, I know this is a contentious issue. The country is littered with stories of broken communities and families torn apart by precisely the situation we face here today thanks to RES. We are legitimately concerned

about very real, documented, data-supported harm that will be felt by large swaths of this community.

What we have presented today and for the past several weeks is clear and definitive evidence of detrimental effects to all three areas of safety, health & wellbeing, and welfare. The other "side" is not even allowed to tell you if they are being paid or threatened with lawsuits to be on that "side" or not. We therefore ask that you consider our data with your friends, family and constituents in mind.

For those interested in many of the things I had to leave out tonight for time constraints, I'm told there will be a session following the meeting here that can answer more in-depth questions that should let us work more closely together on this issue as a community.

Thank you for your time.