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April 23, 2020

PSC Commissioners
Attn: Mr. Darrell Nitschke
Executive Secretary
600 E. Boulevard Ave.- Dept 408
Bismarck, ND 58505-0408
ndpsc@nd.gov

**RE: Northern Divide Wind LLC
Case Number PU-19-376 and PU-19-377**

Dear Commissioners:

I am Jon Backes. I am an attorney in Minot and am the personal representative of the estate of Maynard H. Sandberg, who passed away in October of 2019. Maynard was one of my oldest and closest friends. He was raised in Burke County and owned 80 acres of farmland located in Section 11, Township 161 North, Range 94 West. His farmland had been in his family for 3 generations. The farmland is currently held in his estate, and, because Maynard had no surviving wife or children, will be distributed to a trust which ultimately pays out to several North Dakota charities. Maynard (and his beneficiaries) are fortunate to have his land included in the Northern Divide Wind LLC's current wind project. His land is projected to have two towers and a monitoring system located on it.

I encourage your yes vote on Northern Divide Wind, LLC's siting application as well as on the transmission case connected with that project. Your yes vote will result in a significant economic benefit to the landowners and taxpayers of northwestern North Dakota. As I am sure you are aware, the economic climate in that area of our great state is difficult at present due to the collapse of oil prices, the low level of commodity prices for ag producers and the slow down resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The opportunity to increase jobs and tax revenue while at the same time increasing the economic utilization of land does not arise often. Northern Divide Wind, LLC's project will assist all of these important economic factors in an area that has historically had limited availability of such opportunities. Approval of the project will strike a reasonable balance between protection of the public's interest in preserving wildlife and outdoor spaces, and allowing landowners to obtain the economic benefits of owning and developing their land.

I understand that there have been concerns about the impact of the project on bird populations and wildlife. Maynard and I hunted on and around his land for many years. We spent many days afield enjoying North Dakota's great outdoor traditions and, while we both believe conservation is important to all of North Dakota, the project currently proposed by Northern Divide Wind, LLC appears to strike a reasonable balance between conservation, good stewardship of the land and allowing landowners to develop their land in an economically sound manner. The Burke County commission apparently thinks so as well, given their unanimous approval of the zoning and conditional use permits necessary for the project to proceed.

In closing I would note that it appears that at present in our country, no development of any nature goes unopposed. It is left to elected officials such as yourselves to balance the varying interest of the various constituencies, and make sound policy decisions based on fact and on the effects that will reasonably develop from development, not emotion and hyperbole. It is not an easy task, but in this case, where the local support from the area is strong, local government supports the project, and the project developer has taken significant steps to mitigate the impacts caused by the development, hopefully the path forward is clear.

I thank you for your public service and encourage you to approve the application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon W. Backes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jon W. Backes