

Local Control of Energy Development — Protecting Indiana Farmland and Property Rights

Executive Summary

Energy development projects such as large-scale solar and wind farms present opportunities and challenges across the United States. In Indiana, where agriculture and rural lifestyles are foundational to our economy and heritage, the expansion of government-backed or corporately driven “big energy” projects—particularly utility-scale solar and wind—has raised legitimate concerns regarding **local control, land use, property rights, and community sovereignty**.

This document outlines the issue, current legal environment, and the principled policy position that **local governments and property owners should retain primary authority over decisions affecting their land, farmland, and rural communities**. As your candidate for U.S. Senate representing District 22, I pledge to defend local control and protect Hoosiers from federally or state-imposed energy development that overrides community land use decisions.

Background: Indiana’s Current Landscape

Indiana is historically an agriculture-driven state with deep rural roots. Farmland and property ownership are not just economic assets; they are cultural cornerstones of Hoosier life.

In recent years:

- Counties across Indiana have exercised zoning authority to **ban or restrict commercial wind and solar projects**. As of late 2025, **64 of Indiana’s 92 counties had ordinances, bans, or impediments against new wind and solar projects**—nearly double from four years prior—a clear expression of local will. [Indiana Economic Digest](#)
- State law (SB 411, 2022) created **voluntary site regulation standards** for commercial wind and solar projects. These standards are only adopted if local governments choose to implement them. [Council of State Governments+1](#)
- Attempts in the Indiana General Assembly to streamline or centralize siting authority at the state level have faced resistance from county officials defending home rule and land-use sovereignty. A bill intended to shift some control away from counties

was opposed and ultimately stalled due to local control concerns. [Indiana Capital Chronicle](#)

These developments illustrate that **Indiana's political and legal environment recognizes local land-use authority**, and that counties and property owners are actively asserting this role.

Problem Statement

While infrastructure to meet future energy needs is important, large renewable energy projects (wind and solar farms) often encompass **thousands of acres of farmland**, permanently transforming landscapes, fracturing agricultural productivity, affecting rural character, and potentially diminishing property values. Massive commercial projects may also impose **noise, visual impacts, setbacks, and infrastructure burdens** that local communities are uniquely positioned to evaluate.

The current legal framework in Indiana gives local governments authority to regulate land use, but this authority is **fragile and constantly contested**. There is momentum at the state and federal level to:

1. **Undermine local zoning authority** over site approval decisions.
2. **Replace community decisions with statewide or federal mandates** that override local concerns.
3. **Favor large energy developers at the expense of farmers and property owners.**

Without strong policy safeguards, local residents could lose control over how their land and communities evolve.

Policy Position

I assert the following principle:

Local governments and property owners should retain primary control over land-use decisions related to large-scale energy development projects.

This means **no state or federal policy should undermine zoning authority, override agricultural land protection, or force energy projects on unwilling communities without their consent.**

Key Elements of the Policy

1. **Protect Home Rule and Local Zoning Authority**

Local officials understand the land, culture, and community impact—and must remain the primary authority in siting decisions. State or federal preemption undermines constitutional local government powers and community sovereignty.

2. **Reject State or Federal Mandates That Override Local Decisions**

Legal efforts to centralize siting authority or bypass county zoning will be opposed. Counties that choose to restrict or ban energy projects must have their decisions respected.

3. **Safeguard Farmland and Prime Agricultural Land**

Indiana's farmland is finite, irreplaceable, and economically vital. Large utility-scale projects should not be placed on prime agricultural soil without clear consensus from landowners and local leaders.

4. **Require Meaningful Local Consent Before Projects Proceed**

Developers must secure affirmative approvals from landowners and local governing bodies—not merely lease agreements or permissive state standards.

5. **Prioritize Transparency and Community Agreement**

All impact studies, project plans, and community concerns must be considered and resolved locally before any approval.

Supporting Evidence

- **Local ordinances and moratoriums** in dozens of Indiana counties demonstrate strong community will to manage siting decisions locally. [Indiana Economic Digest](#)
- **Legislative efforts to shift authority** away from local governments have faced opposition precisely because they threaten local control. [Indiana Capital Chronicle](#)
- Voluntary site standards confirm that **state guidance exists without compelling override** of county decisions. [Council of State Governments](#)

Policy Outcomes and Benefits

If implemented, this policy will achieve:

- **Preservation of rural character, farmland viability, and local tax bases**
- **Protection of property values and landowner rights**

- **Enhanced community trust in development decisions**
- **A balanced approach to energy infrastructure that respects local needs**

Communities, not distant bureaucrats, should decide the future of their land.

Conclusion

Local control is not a slogan—it is a fundamental principle rooted in Indiana law and reflective of the democratic will of rural and urban communities alike. As your U.S. Senator representing District 22, I will **fight to protect farmland, uphold local zoning authority, and ensure that big energy interests cannot bypass local decisions to force massive projects on Hoosier landowners.**

Farmland is not expendable.

Property rights are not negotiable.

Local control must be defended.