



**Testimony of Eric Fitzer
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Legislative Hearing on H.R. 596, H.R. 1363, and H.R. 2004
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Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Eric Fitzer and I am the Senior Energy Programs Manager at the Arizona Governor's Office of Energy Policy. I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide testimony with respect to the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act of 2013 (H.R. 596). I understand that the Western Governors' Association has submitted comments in support of H.R. 596; I echo many of their statements.

Solar generation in Arizona grew exponentially from 2010 to 2013. In 2011, there were almost 84,000 MWh of solar energy generated in Arizona. In 2012, the state installed more Utility-scale solar than any other state which in 2013 resulted in enough solar energy to power 145,500 homes.

Governor Brewer has committed to make Arizona the "Solar Capitol of the World" this commitment is reiterated as the number one goal in Arizona's Master Energy Plan, established by executive order in 2014, entitled *emPOWER Arizona*. This goal is to *Increase Solar Energy Development through Best Practices and Leading by Example*.

For some background; Arizona's surface area is approximately 72.9 million acres of land (113,417 square miles) and is the sixth largest in the United States. Major landowners in the state are: the federal government with 42 percent; Tribes 28 percent; Private lands 17 percent; State



Trust Lands 13 percent. For Arizona to become the “Solar Capitol of the World” Arizona will look to development of public lands in order to achieve this goal.

For some further background I was the Planning and Economic Development Director with the Town of Gila Bend. In this role I created the Solar Field Overlay Zone in which to fast track Utility-scale solar developments. This overlay zone program resulted in permitting over 200 MWs of Utility-scale solar projects and millions of dollars in economic development in the Gila Bend area. As just one example this program allowed a development to go from the first submittal to the jurisdiction, to permitting and actual development within six weeks; which was unheard of at the time.

This program was looked at by other communities in Arizona and replicated, all be it not to the six week time frame, but to overall speed up the development of renewable, more specifically solar, energy in Arizona. In conversations with the development community about this process, what was stated on multiple occasions was that, although the time frames were significant for these projects to develop, the greatest benefit of this program was risk reduction. The development community knew when they submitted plans they would get approvals and such approvals would come in a time frame that was predetermined by the developer and the permitting authority. What H.R. 596 does is modernize wind and solar development on public lands. The current permitting process utilized is through Right-Of-Way (ROW) and Special-Use permitting for solar and wind. This bill would establish a specific leasing mechanism thereby improving the permitting process and beginning to reduce the risk to development on public lands.

Another aspect of this bill is that it provides a mechanism for the State and Counties to share in the royalties obtained from renewable energy projects located on public lands. This bill provides incentives for the State of Arizona and Counties within Arizona to promote development on untaxable public lands which would cover state and local government costs to deliver critical governmental services and make needed capital improvements to accommodate development of public lands.



Through my career of working in municipalities in Arizona and now the State of Arizona, the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act could be extremely beneficial for Arizona and is where the majority of the funds generated by renewable energy leases, in Arizona, should be targeted. In the past Congress recognized increased burdens on the development of public lands. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 created a program for the sharing of revenues gained from geothermal energy production on federal lands. H.R. 596 would likewise facilitate the sharing of revenues generated by solar and wind leases.

The Governor's Office of Energy Policy supports the continued and accelerated deployment of renewable energy projects in Arizona. Arizona has a track record of accelerated deployment of solar energy projects and would welcome the opportunity to be the preferred location of the pilot leasing program for solar development through the competitive auction process. Arizona, the soon to be Solar Capitol of the World looks forward to helping meet the current and future energy needs of the United States while ensuring protection of our precious natural resources. Enactment of H.R. 596 will help Arizona achieve these goals. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on an issue of great importance to the state of Arizona.