



DAKOTA RESOURCE COUNCIL

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NEWS RELEASE

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PHOTOS: Attached

North Dakota landowners support increased setback from oil wells

Legislators hear about dealing with negative impacts

BISMARCK, ND---Landowners and others traveled from the Bakken to testify in support of a bill (SB 2206) that would increase the minimum setback for oil wells drilled near people's homes.

Frank Leppell, McKenzie County farmer and former oil worker, gave the committee photos of what it is like to have oil wells surrounding his home and to have trucks lined up on the township road blocking access. There will soon be 21 oil wells within a mile and a half of his home.

"I've worked in the oil fields. I've seen oil well fires. I've put out oil well fires, And, with the modern technology we have now, there is no reason they have to put these so close to people's homes," Leppell said. He was the fire chief of Keene, ND for 20 years.

Theodora Bird Bear, a Dakota Resource Council leader and a mineral owner from Mandaree, said, "A single well in western North Dakota requires at least 2,000 truckloads of supplies, heavy equipment, the toxic fracking fluid, salt water, produced water - and the crude oil, if there is no pipeline." All that she said can be within 500 feet of a person's home and are good reasons to do more to protect human health and safety.

The bipartisan bill, sponsored Sen. Bill Bowman (R-Bowman) would increase the setback from 500 feet to 750 feet, unless the landowner or North Dakota Industrial Commission agrees to a shorter distance. Lepell and Bird Bear recommended the bill be amended to require a setback of a quarter mile, or 1,320 feet.

The hearing room was filled to standing room only and overflowing into the hallway. The majority of those attending were in favor of the bill. Opposition was presented by Ron Ness of the North Dakota Petroleum Council and a lobbyist from Petro-Hunt Corporation.

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PHOTOS by Scott Skokos

1. Frank Lepell, farmer/rancher 25 miles northwest of Watford City, works for a construction company and a former oil worker. He was fire chief of Keene, ND for 20 years.
2. Theodora Bird Bear, Mandaree landowner, mineral owner, and DRC member

