

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 182

BY SENATOR MIZELL

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to jointly conduct a public meeting not later than July 1, 2021, and invite representatives from the Police Jury Association of Louisiana, the Louisiana Municipal Association, Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, the Louisiana Landowners Association, the Louisiana Public Service Commission, the Louisiana Cattleman's Association, the investor-owned utilities, the privately owned utilities, and the Gulf States Renewable Energy Industry Association, for the purpose of receiving public testimony on issues and concerns related to the development and production of solar energy in the state and to provide guidance addressing those issues and concerns.

WHEREAS, the United States is now home to more than two million solar photovoltaic developments according to a 2019 announcement by the Wood Mackenzie Power & Renewables and the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA); and

WHEREAS, in 2020, SEIA reported that solar industry installations are set to quadruple by the end of the decade and the industry is projected to install three hundred twenty-four gigawatts of capacity by 2030; and

WHEREAS, across the country, farmland is being leased by solar companies for the construction and operation of solar installations and the production of solar energy; and

WHEREAS, solar energy development can have tremendous physical impacts, including but not limited to soil compaction due to heavy machinery, disruption of subsurface and surface drainage systems, and accessibility of the subsurface drainage tiles beneath the solar development, on the land both during the solar projects lifetime and afterwards; and

WHEREAS, a legitimate concern surrounding the development of solar energy is how long-term the physical impacts will last and how successfully the land can convert back

to agricultural uses at the end of the solar lease; and

WHEREAS, as the result of economic benefit for one landowner and economic incentives for businesses to create very few jobs, agricultural heritage areas may be subject to negative impacts for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, these leases are being executed in the state of Louisiana and the state has yet to take the lead in establishing uniform guidelines for best practices related to the development of solar energy in the state, including, at a minimum, guidelines on the construction and operation of solar installations, production of solar energy, the impact on productive farm land, mitigation for the purposes of land preservation, and the impact on the value and assessment of the leased property and the surrounding properties; and

WHEREAS, while local governing authorities are grappling with many issues related to the development of solar energy and its long-term physical impact to the land, several have put a temporary stop to the development of solar energy by adopting a moratorium on the construction of solar installations pending guidance from the state; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the state, local government, and landowners that issues and concerns related to the development of solar energy be discussed and debated in a public forum and that the state provide guidance that ensures best practices are utilized and implemented in the development of solar energy.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to jointly conduct a public meeting not later than July 1, 2021, and invite representatives from the Police Jury Association of Louisiana, the Louisiana Municipal Association, Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, the Louisiana Landowners Association, the Louisiana Public Service Commission, the Louisiana Cattleman's Association, the investor-owned utilities, the privately owned utilities, and the Gulf States Renewable Energy Industry Association, for the purpose of receiving public testimony on issues and concerns related to the development and production of solar energy in the state and to provide guidance addressing, at a minimum, the following issues and concerns:

- (1) The construction and operation of solar installations.

(2) The production of solar energy.

(3) The impact of solar installations on productive farmland and its long-term effects on the land.

(4) Mitigation for land preservation.

(5) The impact on the value and assessment of the leased property and the surrounding properties.

(6) The impact on agriculture heritage areas.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary and the commissioner may call additional public meetings to address the issues and concerns as necessary and that each public meeting shall be subject to the Open Meetings Law, R.S. 42:11 et seq.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all interested persons, including landowners who are impacted by the development of solar energy or interested in ensuring that solar installations are constructed and maintained utilizing best practices are strongly encouraged to attend this public meeting and any subsequent meetings on the topic.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources shall submit a written report to the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana not later than thirty days after any public meeting authorized by this Resolution. The report shall include a copy of the minutes from the public meeting and recommendations on legislation needed to address the issues and concerns related to the development of solar energy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE