

Rep. Paul Thissen
Speaker of the House
Minnesota House of Representatives

Rep. Kurt Daudt
Minority Leader
Minnesota House of Representatives

Senator Thomas Bakk
Majority Leader
Minnesota Senate

Senator David Hann
Minority Leader
Minnesota Senate

Dear members of the Minnesota Legislature:

We, the undersigned organizations and businesses, urge you to support the ‘Buy the Farm’ provisions contained in House File 976, the House Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Finance Omnibus bill. The ‘Buy the Farm’ provisions contained in the House Omnibus bill are similar to those in House File 338 and Senate File 183, which we also support.

Background on Minnesota’s ‘Buy the Farm’ law

The ‘Buy the Farm’ law is a result of the hard fought negotiations between farmers and utility companies over high power transmission lines cutting across farmland in the 1970s. Under this unique 1977 law, farmers have the right to require that utilities purchase their entire farm if high voltage power lines are going to pass through their property. This law was intended to require that utilities reimburse farmers for their land, relocation expenses and lost business.

The law has been rarely used over the last 35 years. However, with the construction of more than 650 miles of new high voltage power lines across Minnesota underway, the law has renewed importance to family farmers and landowners across the state.

The current power line project, known as CapX2020, is backed by eleven utility companies, including Xcel Energy and Great River Energy. Today, backers of CapX2020 are trying to avoid paying their fair share to family farmers negatively impacted by the massive project. Using their considerable resources to blur the intent of the law, they are claiming that farmers are “voluntarily” relocating their farms and that any reimbursements for moving expenses and lost business would be “extra compensation.”

Why it is important to restore the original intent of the ‘Buy the Farm’ law now.

Farmers didn’t have a choice about the high voltage lines cutting across their land—it was forced upon them. The CapX2020 high voltage lines are moving ahead, taking land and slicing across farms. Right now, Minnesota family farmers and land owners are wrestling with difficult decisions about the future of their families and their livelihoods.

The least the CapX2020 backers can do for family farmers and landowners is to compensate them fully and promptly. That is the intent of the original ‘Buy the Farm’ law. However, since the utilities have challenged that in court and won at the appellate court level, legislation is needed to clarify that it is the obligation of the utility companies to pay for relocation and lost business costs and set a time frame for payment that works for farmers and landowners.

The cost to fairly and promptly reimburse farmers is minimal.

The cost of fulfilling the utility companies' obligation to farmers is not prohibitive and will not be a burden to the people of Minnesota. The cost of CapX2020 is estimated to be \$2.2 billion. With less than 100 farms expected to file for relocation expenses across the entire state, the cost to the utility companies is nominal. Furthermore, the 'Buy the Farm' law has been on the books since 1977. The utility companies had plenty of time to factor in the costs and plan accordingly.

Restoring the original intent of the 'Buy the Farm' law is about justice.

The 'Buy the Farm' law is unique to Minnesota and it is a testament to our state's commitment to justice. When the extraordinary powers of taking land from people are used, we, the people of this state, must do what we can to lessen the burden of those whose land is being seized. Ensuring people will be promptly and fully reimbursed by the utility companies for all expenses related to the taking of land for high voltage transmission line projects is the least we can do.

We urge you to support the 'Buy the Farm' provisions contained in House File 976, House File 338 and Senate File 183.

For more information about this letter please contact Michael McMahon, Land Stewardship Project, 612-722-6377.

Thank you,



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Policy Program Director/Associate Director
Land Stewardship Project



Doug Peterson
President
Minnesota Farmers Union



Gene Merriam
Former Senator and Original Author of
The Buy the Farm Law



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Executive Director
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Joe Neaton
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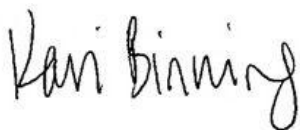


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