

From: [Paul & Janna Swanson](#)
To: [Congestion Study Comments](#)
Subject: Comments on the Rock Island Clean Line
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To the folks at the Department of Energy,

I wrote this piece to be printed but I thought it would be good to send it to you as well. I sincerely hope you read it.

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“The Power of Eminent Domain”, it sounds foreboding like a good movie thriller. In real life there is nothing thrilling about it especially when it is being sought without the “for public need” part.

The Rock Island Clean Line is one such project. They have asked for voluntary easements from thousands of landowners from Illinois and Iowa. They want to erect 15-story transmission towers for over 500 miles, not by, but through prime farm ground, every mile on private property. Almost 1200 Iowa landowners have filed formal objections with the Iowa Utilities Board, while other landowners fight the first 125 miles in Illinois.

The state already told RICL “not on state land”- as the line does not touch DOT or DNR land. The line does not run down established right-of ways. RICL only wants farmland and says that we can keep farming the land- only they will control it. All that means is that they will allow us to maintain it for them. They won’t have to pay people to mow it or spray it to keep trees from growing. That is very convenient- for them.

At the beginning RICL was able to get the blessing of lawmakers by promising that they would achieve 98% of the easements voluntarily. After well over a year they have only roughly 10%.

RICL says they want proposed wind turbines to be able to send their electricity to the East Coast. The East Coast doesn’t need the electricity. Even during recent hearings debating the need for this line the Illinois Commerce Commission admitted this electricity is not needed.

At the inception of RICL 10 East Coast governors sent a long missive to the US Senate stating that they do not want electricity piped in from out of state. I quote, “In our regions, we are currently on track to meet, and in some cases exceed, state or potential federal renewable energy standards well into the

future.”

As a nation we are becoming more energy efficient every day. Wind turbines only produce power when the wind blows. If we ever figure out how to store electricity then solar power will take over because the expense of transmission lines is phenomenal. Their giant environmental footprint is staggering. Imagine the pollution generated from even manufacturing the thousands of 15 story towers and thousands of miles of cable. Now imagine the power needed to tear up over 500 miles of ground.

The only clear reason to build the Rock Island Line is so a handful of out-of-state investors can make big bucks while using public funded subsidies on private land. It is clearly not a public need which is what the force of eminent domain should be reserved for. I will bet if the government decided to put up wind turbines by eminent domain and there was no yearly check for those landowners the *need* would disappear.

The misuse of eminent domain in this country is eroding our freedoms. After the debacle of *Kelo vs. New London*, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor lamented, “Today, the Court abandons [the Fifth Amendment’s] long-held, basic limitation on government power, under the banner of economic development, all private property is now vulnerable to being taken and transferred to another private owner, so long as it might be upgraded, i.e. given to an owner who will use it in a way that the legislature deems more beneficial to the public — in the process.”

Allowing this precedence in the form of the Rock Island Clean Line we all make our private holdings vulnerable to richer, more powerful neighbors.