



County Judges Association of Arkansas

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Members of the General Assembly,

We write you to express the support of the County Judges Association of Arkansas for SB145.

SB145 is a bill that provides access to solar power to counties and other governmental entities. Because of a quirk in the current law, it isn't cost effective for counties to use solar power. This bill addresses that concern and will allow counties to take advantage of a safe-harbor provision in federal law, permit a county to sign a solar services contract, and save tax dollars in the process. Not only will fixing that quirk help counties, but it will also allow cities, school districts, and nonprofits to enter the same type of agreement and protect limited resources.

Utilities are being resistant, not because of the access issues, but because they want the legislature to change the rate structure currently used. The rate issue is currently being considered by the Public Service Commission, which has been taking testimony and evidence for 2 years; however, at the request of the bill sponsor, we have drafted, with the help of experts in the field, a very reasonable compromise proposal. The utilities see our current lack of legal access as leverage. They have proposed to open legal access, while closing access through ratemaking. We hope the utilities accept our compromise proposal, but if they don't it just reveals that they're holding us, and potential savings of tax dollars, hostage.

Our Association is working closely with and supported by Walmart and Audubon to get this bill passed. We believe removing regulatory barriers to cost-efficient energy will benefit taxpayers and support economic development, and we ask for your support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Weaver". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Frank Weaver
CJAA President