

OPPOSE HOUSE BILLS 2775 & 2863

Both HB 2775 and HB 2863 call for a three-year moratorium on the construction of electric transmission lines and require a study of electric and magnetic fields (EMF).

HB 2775 and HB 2863 would amount to economic suicide, halting growth throughout Illinois.

Urban and suburban growth, as well as the expansion of numerous commercial and industrial enterprises in urban and rural areas, require adequate and reliable sources of electricity. If construction of new power lines is prohibited, the economy in the state would suffer.

- Electric utilities throughout the state would likely have to seek Illinois Commerce Commission approval to interrupt customers by implementing rolling blackouts in order to serve as many customers as possible without exceeding equipment capabilities.
- Utilities would have to start a moratorium on new customer service connections until adequate capacity could be installed, similar to recent suburban sewer connection moratoriums in the Chicago area.
- New home construction would be hampered. These bills could create a moratorium on housing starts, and would within three years send some 45,000 housing construction workers to the unemployment lines.
- The expansion and/or relocation of business and industry in Illinois would literally stop overnight, affecting services and jobs.
- The costs involved with serving customers who need the power by using lower voltage equipment would drive up electric rates.

Studies have not confirmed negative health effects.

Advocates of these bills cite the chance of adverse health effects caused by EMF as justification for the three-year moratorium. Yet, no past or current studies have established any persuasive evidence that EMF can result in a hazard to human health.

Opponents

Illinois State Chamber of Commerce
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce
Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA)
The Management Association of Illinois
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Southwestern Illinois Industrial Association
Illinois Retail Merchants Association (IRMA)
Illinois Construction Industry Committee
The Homebuilders Association of Illinois
Illinois Association of Realtors
Illinois Industrial Utility Consumers
Central Illinois Light Company
Central Illinois Public Service Company
Commonwealth Edison Company
Illinois Power Company
Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives

The moratorium would actually increase public exposure to magnetic fields.

By prohibiting utilities from replacing aging transmission facilities, the moratorium would, in fact, expose the public to higher levels of magnetic fields due to increased loading on existing lines and the construction of more new lines of 60 kilovolts or less. These lines are more likely to be located in densely populated areas. The EMF associated with high power transmission lines is, in most instances, less than that associated with household appliances used daily.

Federal and state agencies are already in the process of studying EMF, and further study by other state agencies would be costly and duplicative in these fiscally difficult times.

In Washington, D.C., HR 3593 proposes a coordinated effort of a series of studies on EMF at the Federal level. This legislation ensures that EMF research will be managed by responsible health-based federal agencies.

The Illinois Department of Public Health in coordination with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has published a report on risk assessment of EMF for the State Legislature ("Possible Health Effects of Extremely Low Frequency Electric and Magnetic Field Exposure: A Review," March 1992). The report calls for more education and research:

- "with the scientific information now available, it is not possible to set a standard or say that any given level is safe or dangerous..."
- "a reasonable public policy at this time to inform people about what is known and unknown concerning this issue."

The report also refers to the California Department of Health study, which serves as a reference for Illinois: "regulation of electric and magnetic fields from power lines is premature due to the present lack of information on cause and effect relationships."

The Legislative Research Unit also conducted an extensive EMF study, including a literature review in 1990 ("Biological Effects of Electrical and Magnetic Fields," Research Response, Jan. 1990). It determined any regulation on EMF would be premature.