November 15, 2012

Dear State Policymakers:

The siting of interstate transmission lines has long been a problem that has vexed both states and the federal government. With the expected growth in electricity demand, coupled with the need to bring renewable energy to market and the necessity to enhance and secure the nation’s energy infrastructure, the need for added transmission capacity has never been more apparent. National need and parochial interests, however, often do not align and have led to an underdeveloped and overstressed electricity transmission system.

As state legislators we have seen first firsthand how difficult it can be to site transmission lines across state boundaries. Too often inconsistent practices and policies make it next to impossible to build interstate transmission lines, despite the potential benefits a proposed line may offer to states and consumers. One solution may be the formation of an interstate compact governing transmission line siting. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 granted states advance congressional consent to create regional interstate compacts.

To that end we have co-chaired an ongoing effort sponsored by The Council of State Governments to develop an electric transmission line siting compact. Compacts provide states a tool that will ensure long lasting and wide ranging interstate cooperation. This compact, which is now ready for introduction and consideration by state legislators, was a member driven initiative and was funded initially by CSG’s 21st Century Foundation. Before moving ahead with the drafting of legislation, CSG first convened an Advisory Group of interested stakeholders to discuss compact law and explore the feasibility of a transmission line siting agreement. That group, which consisted of state legislators from each of CSG’s regions, representatives from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Department of Energy, subject matters experts and interested stakeholders, supported the compact concept and endorsed the drafting of such an agreement.

The drafting team has worked tirelessly over the course of the last year to have legislation ready for consideration beginning in the 2013 session. The compact is intended to improve efficiencies and create standardization during the siting process by establishing common applications, predetermined timelines and uniform public comment periods. Such an agreement, and its requirements, would be triggered on an ad hoc basis and pertain only to those states that are both members of the compact and impacted by the proposed line.

We believe that this piece of legislation provides a real opportunity for states to actively engage in the process of siting interstate transmission lines. It has the potential to standardize the siting process, reduce many of the inefficiencies that have previously prevented lines from being built and ultimately save states and consumers money.

We appreciate your interest in this project and welcome any questions you might have about the development process or the compact language.

Sincerely,

Kim Koppelman
Past National Chair, CSG
State Representative
North Dakota House of Representatives

Tom Sloan
Past Chair, CSG’s Energy and Environment Task Force
State Representative
Kansas House of Representatives