

An open letter to Tal McBride, partner, Highland New Wind Development LLC:

NIMBY, the acronym for Not In My Backyard, is a pejorative label.

It's a slur used to discredit those who question the merits of a particular development by not-so-subtly implying that we are narrow-minded and selfish, that we put our self interest ahead of the common good, that we are standing in the way of progress for all.

Of course, such a slur depends, for its force, on maintaining the belief among the majority of the population that a particular development is in the common interest and represents progress for all.

Industrial wind power on Appalachian ridges is not development in the common interest; it is development in the economic interest of the very few.

How do I know this? Because I have done the research. Why am I saying it? Because it is the truth. And, as George Orwell said, "In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

If industrial wind power in Appalachia made economic, environmental or common sense, I would be compelled — not just as a writer and a former environmental consultant, but as a mother with concerns for my son's future — to say that it did.

If industrial wind power in Appalachia were actually "green," if it limited our dependence on coal-fired utilities and reduced CO2 emissions, if it benefited local communities by creating jobs and lowering energy costs, then, yes! Yes, of course, I would be for it! Absolutely! I'm no fool.

Listen, I grew up at a hazardous waste recycling plant started by my parents in the early 1970s. Talk about witnessing, firsthand, the dark side of fossil fuels. Yikes! I have spent most of my adult life attempting to help various industries become better environmental citizens, create less waste, and, in so doing, pocket more profits.

If industrial wind power in Appalachia made economic, environmental or common sense, I would welcome it! I would work for community-based siting regulations. I would work to insure transparency in a community-based regulatory process that provided citizens an authentic cost-benefit analysis.

Make no mistake, I would support industrial wind in Appalachia if any data existed to support it other than outrageous government-guaranteed profits for wind developers.

Such data does not exist.

Industrial wind power in Appalachia is not good for the people of Appalachia. If it were good for Appalachia, I would be the first human being on board. This is my adopted

home. I am a child of the Mississippi Delta, but my soul found its home in these mountains.

Not in My Back Yard? No, Tal, you got that wrong. Not in anyone's back yard if that yard is located on the forested ridges of the eastern United States.

I have repeated the phrase that industrial wind on Appalachian ridges makes no economic, environmental or common sense. It doesn't for the residents of Highland and Pocahontas counties. It doesn't for the nation as a whole.

But it does for you, doesn't it? And that, after all, is the point. You stand to make a tidy fortune, courtesy of the taxpayers, while the ratepayers take a hit underwriting the equipment upgrades necessary to tie your paltry megawatts to the grid. For you, it's a deal too good to be true. You've hit a once-in-a-lifetime jackpot. No wonder you have proven yourself capable of saying just about anything if it helps to make this deal go down.

As for me, I wear the NIABY label with pride — Not in Anyone's Back Yard. And I will continue to dedicate myself to revealing the real costs and benefits of industrial wind. Industrial wind is not the answer to slowing climate change or reducing dependence on foreign oil. Industrial wind does not lower electric bills or create jobs.

Industrial wind does disrupt scenic and historic landscapes revered for generations. Industrial wind does kill unknown numbers of eagles and other raptors.

Industrial wind does stand to make you, personally, a boatload of cash.

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