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Oklahoma Policy Institute

2018 POLICY PRIORITY: STOP “PROSPERITY DISTRICT” SCHEME THAT COULD PUT POLLUTERS ABOVE THE LAW

Background

Last year, the Oklahoma House of Representatives passed HB 2132, a bill that would allow the creation of “Prosperity Districts” in the state. The bill was not taken up by the Senate, and that’s a good thing. Prosperity districts are the brainchild of Compact for America, an out-of-state advocacy organization that’s also behind a push to rewrite the U.S. Constitution. According to their plan, any landowner or group of landowners could file a petition with their county to create a district on their land – and once the district is created, they can make most of their own rules.



These districts could easily be used as a way to get around local governments and voters and exempt themselves from any laws or rules the district creators don’t like. For example, a factory farm could create a Prosperity District that allows them to ignore state and local rules about waste disposal and food safety. This is a dangerous path to explore. Special rules in each prosperity district, and the usual state and local rules applying everywhere else, creates great potential for administrative confusion and for powerful special interests to take advantage of Oklahoma’s land and resources.

The Solution

Prosperity districts are not the solution that Oklahoma needs. There are better ways to encourage economic opportunity and development, especially in our rural areas, while ensuring that the public is protected from harm. Investing in our education and health care systems would be a much more promising path than allowing a few landowners to make their own rules.

What You Can Do

Please contact your state Representative and Senator and urge them to reject any legislation that allows the creation of “Prosperity Districts” in Oklahoma.

You can look up your Senator and Representative at <http://okpolicy.org/find-your-legislator/>, call the House switchboard at 405-521-2711, and call the Senate switchboard at 405-524-0126.

To receive SMS advocacy alerts on important economic security issues, text OKECON to 51555.