

WA House votes 94-1 to limit light pollution from wind energy farms

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KENNEWICK, WA

The [Washington state House passed](#) a bill nearly unanimously Monday that would require wind farms to turn off the blinking red lights on turbines if no airplane is nearby.

The vote in favor of [House Bill 1173](#) was 94-1.

The lone vote against was cast by Rep. Shelley Kloba, a Democrat from Kirkland, a Seattle suburb.

Rep. April Connors, R-Kennewick, sponsored the bill along with Reps. Mark Klicker and Skyler Rude, both R-Walla Walla.

The bill comes as Scout Clean Energy is seeking approval for up to 244 turbines along the Horse Heaven Hills [just south of the Tri-Cities](#).



Scout Clean Energy plans a wind farm on Benton County farm land south of the Tri-Cities along the Horse Heaven Hills ridgeline south of Badger Road.

Its blinking red lights would be seen along the ridge line of the hills from 20 to 30 miles away, according to those who oppose the Horse Heaven Clean Energy Center.

The bill also would require existing wind energy farms in Washington state to install Aircraft Detection Lighting Systems that meet Federal Aviation Administration standards for wind turbines by 2027.

The bill initially required the installation by 2026 but was amended to give wind farm owners an additional year to comply. The state has more than 2,000 wind turbines, Connors said.

Several states already require that turbines have the radar-detecting systems that only turn on red blinking lights as low-flying airplanes are near and then shut the lights off after they have passed.

“This bill is about preserving the beauty of our night sky,” said Connors after the House passed the bill.

“In Eastern Washington we don’t always have a say where energy is sited, but we do want to take good care of our landscape and our hillsides,” she said on the House floor.

While the lights serve an important safety function, they also can be an eyesore for nearby communities and cause light pollution, according to House Republicans staff.

Rep. Tom Dent, R-Moses Lake, a pilot and founder of Tom Dent Aviation, said the bill would reduce some of the conflicting and confusing lights pilots see when flying.

“This is technology that is long overdue. It is going to work really well,” he said.

In an earlier committee hearing, the Association of Washington Business said it was concerned that costs for adding aircraft detection lighting systems, particularly [on existing wind turbines](#), would be passed on as higher rates to electricity users.

But Richland scientist James Conca, speaking at the same hearing, estimated that for the Horse Heaven Clean Energy Center the lighting systems would amount to 0.1% of the total cost to build the wind farm.

The measure next must be considered by the Washington state Senate.