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TUCSON OPINION

Local Opinion: Business Leaders in Support of Prop 412

By Michael Guymon, Ted Maxwell, Judy Lowe and David Godlewski Special to the Arizona Daily Star

May 10, 2023

The following is the opinion and analysis of the writer:

Investing in infrastructure is among one of the best ways to promote economic growth. That's why we support Proposition 412, which will strengthen our local energy grid and ensure access to reliable power for growing businesses as well as companies looking to relocate to our region.

Prop 412 would facilitate construction of a critical new power line needed to serve expanding energy needs in central Tucson. While such projects often attract opposition from nearby residents, this one also prompted the City of Tucson to protest that the overhead line would violate an ordinance that restricts development along certain roads.

Rather than forcing its way forward, TEP chose to collaborate with city leaders and local residents on a plan to install parts of the project underground. To offset the cost, they proposed adding a fee to an updated franchise agreement, which allows TEP to use public rights-of-way for its local energy grid.

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This investment in an updated, modernized system makes good economic sense. We need a robust, resilient energy grid that can stand up to increasingly extreme weather and support the needs of new employers that can create jobs and advance economic opportunity in the heart of the city.

At the request of the Mayor and Council, TEP also agreed that a portion of the new revenues be used for projects that support the city's climate change mitigation efforts. This creates a way for us to share responsibility for efforts that promote a more sustainable future for our city.

The investments would be managed by a board including equal representation from the city and TEP, providing an opportunity for thoughtful review and strategic alignment. This five-member board will also include an independent voice that does not represent either the City or TEP to promote balance and transparency as they deliberate the most effective and responsible ways to allocate the funds.

While these conversations added complexity to an otherwise routine land use agreement, their combined appeal is simple enough: Prop 412 is a compromise. As such, it reflects a collaborative approach to local leadership that is critical to our community's long-term success.

As business leaders, we recognize that community alignment is needed to attract and retain employers and create conditions that support economic growth. Those looking to invest here need assurance that our institutions are working together toward shared goals — including reliable, affordable and increasingly sustainable energy.

That's why it's rewarding to see that Prop 412 is endorsed by so many community leaders. Mayor Regina Romero and four members of the Tucson City Council are joined by current and former elected officials in supporting the measure, along with local police and fire fighters, neighborhood advocates and our own organizations, which work to strengthen our local economy.

Our economic prospects benefit greatly from TEP's ambitious and pragmatic transition to cleaner energy resources. Prop 412 would allow TEP to continue progressing toward the target it has developed in consultation with local stakeholders: 70 percent of our community's power from renewable resources by 2035. It also would fund further reductions in our carbon footprint through investments in the city's climate resiliency.

Franchise agreements with our local utilities help promote consistent, reliable and affordable service. TEP and the City of Tucson have had franchise agreements in place for nearly 100 years, and Prop 412 would allow this successful partnership to continue.

We encourage you to vote yes on Proposition 412 to help secure a sustainable energy future for our community. For more information, visit **tep.com/prop412** or **yeson412.com**.

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Michael Guymon