

**Senate Utilities Committee
Testimony in Support of SB 172
American Petroleum Institute
Presented by Kent Eckles
Tuesday, February 16th, 2021**

Mister Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Kent Eckles on behalf of the American Petroleum Institute.

The American Petroleum Institute (API) is a trade association based in Washington, DC, that represents over 625 member companies involved in all aspects of the oil and natural gas industry. I am here today in support of SB 172.

The safety of our communities, workers and operations is the number one priority of the oil and natural gas industry and our members work continuously to reach a goal of zero incidents. Recent third-party actions aimed at disrupting operations at oil and natural gas sites and facilities has raised significant concern among our members.

As indicated in recent FBI analysis, “an increase in criminal acts by environmental extremists against oil and natural gas related construction projects is likely, as criminal incidents violating federal, state, and local statutes have occurred in several states since late July 2016 in areas of or related to contentious oil and natural gas related infrastructure development projects. This includes facilities and construction sites in the Midwest.

Increased criminal activity aimed at oil and natural gas operations and facilities, as confirmed by the FBI’s own analysis, cannot not be deterred by industry security actions alone. Investigations and law enforcement actions are a critical element to preventing criminality as well as potential environmental damage. While we respect individuals’ rights to free speech and peaceful protest we also believe government can play a strong role by enacting laws, like SB 172, that can act as a deterrent to discourage those who want to cause damage to critical infrastructure in the State.

Recently in just the Midwest, similar legislation has passed in Iowa (2018), Indiana (2019), Missouri (2019) and Wisconsin (2019).

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in favor of SB 172.