



Billboard Control Case Study
BILLBOARD TOWERS OVER HOMES - LEGALLY

Billboard operators like to portray themselves as solid citizens of corporate America. In reality, the billboard industry is a rogue industry with little respect for our communities or the environment.

Richard McNeely and Claude Painter of Pax, WV, learned this lesson the hard way. The two, both of whom own homes in the tiny town along Interstate 77, were startled to find a construction crew from Arkansas in their neighborhood over Columbus Day weekend, 1996. The crew hurriedly constructed a 102-foot billboard on the property of a gas station -- but looming over the men's homes.

Dismayed by the gigantic billboard and its lights, which now prevent them from using their porch at night, the men had their properties appraised. The results: an appraiser found that the homes' values had dropped by as much as 30%.

Painter and McNeely filed suit to have the billboard removed. The judge, despite noting that "all billboards... are an ugly pox on the natural beauty of our state," refused to require the sign removed.

Ironically, the property owner who allowed the billboard to be constructed lives in a billboard-free neighborhood. Still, she claims that she "would love to have a billboard at my house."